





F. K. K. K.





## OUR LADY'S HOURS



# OUR LADY'S HOURS

*An Introduction to*  
THE LITTLE OFFICE OF OUR LADY

*by*

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*"Thou lightest my lamp, O Lord ; O my God  
enlighten my darkness."*—Ps. xvii, 29.

To the Memory of Very Rev. Father John A. Dalton, O.P., late Prior of St. Magdalen's, Drogheda, these notes, written at his suggestion, are gratefully inscribed. He died on December 7th, 1939. May he rest in peace.

My best thanks are due to those who encouraged and helped me to carry out his idea : Right Rev. Mgr. Boylan, Very Rev. Fr. Hilary Carpenter O.P., my brother Most Rev. Dr. Finbar Ryan O.P., who has also allowed me to print his paraphrase of Latin verses facing p. 1 ; and to two others.



## PREFACE.

IF the Liturgical Revival amongst the layfolk is to be productive of its full possibilities, there must be a renewal of that familiar participation in all the Liturgical Offices of the Church, in the official Hours of corporate prayer which are so closely associated with the daily offering of the Holy Sacrifice. Such a participation was a notable characteristic of the ages of Faith, even amongst the unlettered, but unhappily gave place to private or 'popular' devotions as a result of the penal times. Perhaps there is no better re-introduction, especially for layfolk, to the 'Office' of the Church, as the liturgical worship of God is generically styled, than an appreciation and use of *The Little Office of Our Lady*, or *Our Lady's Hours*. This Office is a shorter, simpler type, yet a faithful reflection, of the Divine Office recited daily by Priests and Religious, men and women, and a familiar use of it will intensify that conscious unity in worship and prayer which pertains essentially to membership of the Mystical Body of Christ wherein all action is absorbed into the action of God the Son made man.

It is, perhaps, the necessarily impersonal and selfless character of liturgical prayer that must be insisted on especially in these days of selfish individuality. Once incorporated into Christ by Baptism we must live and act primarily as Members of His Body, in His Name and Person rather than in our own. Our effort towards God is no longer a

merely private and isolated effort ; it is a communal, therefore selfless and impersonal, participation in the whole action of the Mystical Body and of Christ, its Head. This action may well be summed up in a single phrase, ' liturgical prayer '.

Such prayer, whether it be the Holy Sacrifice itself or the abundant daily prayer which centres round the Mass, is called the ' Divine Office ' ; and the Latin word *officium* means ' duty '. It is something done under obedience, and its primary value lies not in the fact that it is attractive or even obviously helpful to the individual worshipper, but in the fact that it is something done under authority. The whole work of Redemption is an act of obedience ; ' *fiat* ' is the word found at the beginning and the end of the Incarnation. Every member and faculty of Our Lord's Humanity was subordinated as an obedient instrument to the Divine Will, and the splendid blindness of His human obedience is shown for our example and encouragement in the Agony in the Garden with its triumphant act of loving submission.

A selfless and generous participation in this essential obedience of Our Lord is the primary requirement for the members of His Mystical Body ; and the divinely authorised framework for such a participation is provided by that liturgical prayer which is called ' *officium* ' or ' duty '.

Therein the Church is being used precisely as an instrument of its Mystical Head, and the power and worth of such prayer are the power and worth of the prayer of Our Divine Lord Himself, being an



integral part of that supreme act of worship of which the apex is the Mass, the very sacrifice of Redemption. Those, therefore, who participate actively in this 'communal duty' participate also in the action of Christ Himself.

Though this is primarily true of the Divine Office, it is also true in its degree of the Little Office of Our Lady. We may say that this Office bears a relation to the Divine Office parallel to that borne by Our Lady to her Divine Son in the economy of Redemption. To reiterate what I wrote in another place, since "conformity with Christ in His Mystical Body is the cause and measure of participation in His redemptive act, it is abundantly clear that Our Lady has a unique right to the title of Co-Redemptrix which this participation implies. In all things, from the greatest to the least, she was in the most perfect degree Christlike, but above all in that supreme quality which epitomises the whole of the Incarnation, namely her 'willingness', or in other words, her obedience. Like her Son she came not to do her own will; like Him, she prayed: 'Thy Will be done'; like Him she was 'obedient unto death even to the death of the Cross'.

By this conformity with her Son in mind and heart she merited the fulness of grace for herself, not indeed the primary grace of exemption from Original Sin,—that only the God-Man could earn for her,—but the positive perfection of grace manifesting itself in the closest union of love with God. And by it, too, she merited in a unique way the application of the fruits of redemption to all

mankind and the outpouring of every grace. Therefore is she meetly called Co-Redemptrix."

Just as we are assured of a gracious hearing from God when we put our needs before Him in the Name of His Son, so we are assured of the help we need when we approach Him, as He has appointed, through the Divine Mother. In our consciousness of our own unworthiness we might fear to ask of God directly. We might even hesitate to ask of Our Lord whose manhood cannot entirely hide His awful Godhead from our suppliant thought. But none could fear to seek the aid of a loving and understanding human mother. Thus does God of His courteous loving-kindness make the road to Him as easy as may be. But further, since our prayer must not be merely asking, but must be thanking and praising and worshipping, in her person may we also find one who is not unworthy, as we are, to offer such prayer to the infinite goodness and majesty of God. In this, too, she will show unto us the fruit of her womb, and our prayer with her in her Little Office will hearten us to prayer with Him in His Divine Office.

Though it is true, as I have already indicated, that the primary value of the Office lies in the act of obedience it implies, it would be far from true to suppose that this is its only value. As with the mysteries of Faith, where the essential act of assent is expanded and perfected by the effort to understand the implications of the revealed truth, where the sublimity of the Apostles' Creed flowers and fructifies in the glory of the *Summa Theologica* of

St. Thomas Aquinas, so it is with the Office of the Church, where the primary act of obedience opens the way to an inexhaustible treasure house of spirituality. Yet there must needs be guides for a path that is still trodden only by the few, still unknown and strange to the many. Such a guide is provided, especially for those about to begin that journey, by this present book. It will open their eyes to the richness, the profundity, the consolation, of the Office; it will manifest the latter as the very cradle of Faith and of Hope and of Charity.

It is because of the vital importance of liturgical prayer and because of the value of the Little Office of Our Lady in this connection that I rejoice to be associated in some small way with this valuable introduction to that Office. Professor Mary Ryan has effected herein an admirable combination of loving appreciation and scholarly analysis which needs no further preliminary words of mine, except they be to thank her for allowing me the privilege of this Preface in which to offer once again my unworthy measure of love and honour 'to her who is the hope of men', to her whose 'Little Office' is a precious heritage of the sons and daughters of St. Dominic.

FR. HILARY J. CARPENTER, O.P.

Blackfriars,  
Oxford, June, 1940.



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Send up the unisonal song to heaven,  
The sequent cadences !  
Together bursting into psalms of praise,  
Together sinking to awed silences.  
To God,  
To God,  
The Holy Mighty God,  
With hearts uplift sing joyfully :  
Full utterance paying,  
Not a chord denying,  
Of the appointed hymnody.  
Be it a living song instinct with high intelligence,  
Not soul-less noise all dead and inarticulate,  
Yet speed it meekly  
(Unto Him who waits His creatures' praise)  
On wings of love.

F.R. July 19, 1910.

Auscultando cane, simul incipe, desine plane.  
Posterior nunquam cantus incipiatur  
Quam sonus anterior perfecte fine fruatur.  
Verbum dicatur ut syllaba non sileatur.  
Cum Domino psalles psallendo tu tria serves  
Erige cor sursum, bene profer, respice sensum.  
Non clamor sed amor sonat in aure Dei.  
(Worcester Gradual)

## I. LITURGICAL PRAYER

On the first page of the Dominican Tertiary Rule it is laid down that we should practice "assiduous prayer,—as far as possible liturgical prayer."

The object of these notes is to gather together, from here and from there, hints and suggestions, simple examples and proofs, to show that it is possible to go farther in that direction than most people think,—not only possible, but relatively easy; and at the same time positively attractive and inspiring.

The word *liturgy* in its Greek origin means a public service, which richer citizens discharged at their own expense; and secondarily, public divine service. As used now in the Catholic Church it covers the forms of worship and of public prayer which the Church officially adopts as her own mode of expression; and these are contained in the Missal, the Breviary, the Ritual, and the Pontifical; along with the Ceremonial of Bishops, and the Martyrology.

The first and most important help towards liturgical prayer, towards drawing on what Pius X<sup>1</sup> called "the primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit", is the use of the Missal—happily so much more general than, say, thirty or forty years ago. But we must beware of the possibility of using it, or rather of continuing to use it, merely or mainly because of its varied interest.<sup>2</sup> It is a matter of experience that those who begin

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1. Quoted by Lefèbvre, *Catholic Liturgy*, *passim*.

2. Dom Ryelandt, *Mass and the Interior Life*, pp. 17 & 25.



to discover its resources are usually first attracted by the Proper. That is a providential attraction, one of those merciful accommodations to "the multifarious needs, capabilities and weaknesses of human nature"<sup>3</sup> that are destined to lead us to something deeper and higher; a beginning from which, as from all our experience, we should progress towards a more abundant life.

In the pamphlet just quoted Father Carpenter sets out, primarily for Tertiaries, the fundamentals of that progress. He shows that really to understand their reason for existence and the aim of their Rule, they must try to understand, first the place of religion in human life, then the place and function of the Liturgy in religion, and the meaning of the Mass as "the centre-point of all Liturgy"; beyond all and at the origin of all, the "mystical significance . . . . the divine economy of the Incarnation".<sup>4</sup>

Yes, the Mass is the centre-point. But to speak of a centre implies some reference to all that lies about it. About the Mass lies all that is contained in the Ritual and the Breviary; and therefore we shall understand and use the Missal better if we do not confine ourselves to it. Many besides Tertiaries should respond to some words<sup>5</sup> of the Benedictine Abbot Schuster, now Cardinal Archbishop of Milan. Regretting that numbers of Catholics have come to

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3. Fr. Carpenter, *Dominican Tertiaries and the Liturgy*, p. 6.

4. This is developed by Father Carpenter in a second pamphlet, *The Life Blood of the Mystical Body*, which should be read as a supplement to the first.

5. *The Sacramentary*, Vol. III, p. 252.



prefer their own private devotions to the grand official prayer of the Church, he continues :

“In the time of our grandfathers, popular devotion, promoted chiefly by the great Mendicant Orders whose spirituality was based on choral prayer, drew its inspiration directly from the Liturgy, and found delight in the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, the Office of the Dead, the Seven Penitential Psalms etc., thus participating in the piety of the Church and coming into closer contact with its spirit of devotion.”

Cardinal Schuster develops this idea in many parts of his great work. These forms of prayer, he points out, are more than merely natural and human. They are either taken direct from the inspired word of God; or they are the utterances of the unerring Church, in-breathed by the Spirit of God: “The dogmatic element in Christianity emanates from a direct and positive divine revelation . . . the life and action of the Church are derived from the Spirit of Christ, which dwells and works within her.”<sup>6</sup>

Now, we share in that life and action in a peculiarly direct way when we join in liturgical prayer. It is awe-inspiring and yet stimulating to reflect on the scope and effect of this common prayer, which we profess to make in the Preface and *Communicantes* of the Mass. “The Church lives through Christ, not through Christ the Head separated from His mystical Body, but through Christ Head and Body . . . . When the Church

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<sup>6</sup>. *Ibid.*, I, p. 3.

prays, it is Christ, it is the Holy Spirit who pray . . . .”<sup>7</sup> And as “every man is in a mystical sense one with the humanity of Christ”<sup>8</sup> we can take part in that prayer. We can do, as another writer<sup>9</sup> points out, what St. John saw done in his vision. “In this picture of the worship of heaven . . . . we have all the elements of the liturgical prayer. He who sits upon the Throne is the object of all worship; the mystic living creatures are continually pouring forth their adoration; the elders are for ever casting in abasement their crowns before the Throne, the glorious angelic host in their varied choirs, each a very world of beauty, of intelligence and love, join in the mighty song of praise; the one Voice from all creation, animate and inanimate, is always giving expression of their love and worship to their Maker, harping as harpers on the mystical harp of the heart of the Lamb, Who has redeemed them to God and is in their midst as the Leader and Director of all the adoration, and the Voice Himself which comes from the Throne, the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. For it is deep down in the Heart of the Lamb that are found all the prayers of the Saints. He first conceives them as the expression of His own worship to the Father, and then instils them into our souls; thus causing us to have *the same mind that is in Himself* (Phil.ii.5). He is the eternal Praise and

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7. *Ibid.* III., p. 244.

8. Quoted from the admirable p. 6 on the liturgical life in Fr. Carpenter's pamphlet.

9. Taunton, *Little Office of Our Lady*, pp. 10-11, 14.

the Glory of His Father. It is through Him alone that we have access to the Throne of Mercy.

“Thus the public prayer of the Church is nothing else but the prayer which the Divine Head of the Church is ever pouring forth on our behalf to His Eternal Father. Sharing as we do in His life, forming but one body with Him, He makes use of our souls as so many instruments by which He can praise God . . . .

“This is why the Church always ends our prayers with the words ‘Through Christ our Lord’—to unite us with Him who prays in us . . . .”

We may add that by this intimate union He makes use of our souls also to further His divine purposes on earth in us and through us; in and through whatever we do and whatever we suffer. The Divine Office prays every morning: *Let the brightness of the Lord our God be upon us, and direct Thou the works of our hands over us; yea, the work of our hands do Thou direct.*

Besides this direct fellowship with our Lord and the heavenly hosts, there is also the human fellowship which rouses us to a lively sense of the Communion of Saints: we pray expressly, in various moods, with and for all the members of the Church, and they in turn with and for us. Our prayers are thus more efficacious, because more charitable, less self-engrossed; we make them with a truer sense of proportion, of our small yet essential place in the scheme of creation.

Further, liturgical prayer, “besides the power which it exerts on the heart of God, contains also the rule of life for the faithful”. The Liturgy is

"the real *Breviarium*, or *compendium* of the Scriptures, the popular exposition of the divine revelation, and of the truths which we must believe in order to be saved. *Legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*"<sup>10</sup> Through it our spiritual knowledge grows, our spiritual interest and outlook deepen and widen. We become more conscious of the reality of the invisible world in which we move and have our being. In short, we learn our religion and we learn at the same time to live by it.

These considerations are immediately practical, profitable, and encouraging. . . .

Practical: "It surely does not require . . . anything more than ordinary intelligence," writes Father Carpenter, "to realise that the matter of our salvation is the one above all that should absorb every power and all the energy of our being." . . . "No man can begin to achieve that subordination of his activities to the final purpose of his life unless . . . his formal worship of God is considerably more than a mere supernatural incident in an otherwise natural life." If we really share in the official prayer of the Church, "each day may be built up round the Sacrifice of the Mass" and each year be "as an edifice columned by the Liturgical Seasons, which renew in a mystical way the chief events of Our Lord's life on earth. The possibility of thus using one's life will be readily seen to be a practical and important reality."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>. *The Sacramentary*, III, pp. 244, 245. This famous formula of Pope St. Celestine may be translated: "The rule laid down for prayer establishes the rule for belief."

<sup>11</sup>. *Dominican Tertiaries and the Liturgy*, pp. 12, 13, 14.

Profitable : "The best way to pray for oneself is to pray for all," writes P. Sertillanges.<sup>12</sup> "We shall have our share and a richer share, because it is linked up with the share of all others." The Church's prayers "meet unfailingly our permanent essential needs; and remind us of them."

Encouraging : in the moving words of Juliana of Norwich<sup>13</sup>, "He (Christ) willeth that we take us mightily to the faith of Holy Church . . . in solace of true Understanding, with all the blessed Common (i.e. the Communion of Saints). For one single person may oftentimes be broken, as it seemeth to himself, but the whole Body of Holy Church was never broken, nor never shall be, without end. And therefore a sure thing it is, a good and a gracious, to will meekly and mightily to be fastened and oned (i.e. united) to our Mother, Holy Church, that is Christ Jesus".

Delight, practicality, profit, encouragement, are all to be found in liturgical prayer for a little seeking. It is in truth the place of pasture and the water of refreshment of which we read in Psalm 22. Our intelligence feeds, rests, grows strong; our sense of beauty—that most complex and delicate of our natural faculties—exults and is stilled into a divine repose; our will is stirred to "a deliberate purpose of praising God in union with Jesus Christ . . . . We become His mouthpiece, and give voice to the feelings of adoration, thanksgiving, supplication and atonement which are for ever welling up from the

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<sup>12</sup>. *Spiritualité*, pp. 233, 229.

<sup>13</sup>. *Revelations of Divine Love*, p. 154. (Ed. Methuen).

Sacred Heart as Jesus lifts up His five wounds before the Father and intercedes for us. We give voice to that *great cry* which, amidst the toil and bustle of the day, and in the stillness and solitude of the night, is ever ascending from that same Sacred Heart in the countless tabernacles where in sacramental life Jesus abides in our midst. His prayer is ours ; ours is His." <sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>. Taunton, *loc. cit.*



## II. THE DIVINE OFFICE.

The Divine Office, contained in the Breviary, is but little known to layfolk nowadays, though that was not always so: in the earliest times "the faithful shared day and night with the Apostles that canonical life of which the Altar is the luminous centre". For the Church's prayer being "but the preparation, or accompaniment, or thanksgiving, for her Sacrifice",<sup>1</sup> the Office is linked up in its various parts, by readings, antiphons, collects, with the Mass: which is thus as it were a jewel mounted in a precious setting. The Night Office (Matins and Lauds) was formerly called Vigils and is the development of the vigils which preceded the celebration of Mass on the great festivals. Of these we still have traces in our Missal, notably on Holy Saturday. The preparatory part of the Mass,—the Mass of the Catechumens,—preserves in another way the same course of preparation for the Mystery, and consists, as does the Night Office, of psalms, prayers and readings. The Day Hours are a continuation and development of the Jewish custom of sanctifying the day throughout by prayer: "Seven times a day I have given praise to Thee", says Ps. 118. The prophet Daniel prayed three times a day, and in the Acts of the Apostles there are many references to prayer at special hours. This daily continuity of Christian prayer is relative for the individual, who prays at frequent intervals, but

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1. Clérissac, *Le Mystère de l'Eglise*, pp. 66, 64.

absolute in the Church. "Unceasingly, with the ceaseless course of the sun,"—we might think of this when we read in Psalm 18 of the sun's *going forth from the end of heaven And his circuit even to the end thereof*,—"successive choirs of religious men and women chant the passing hours in a chorus of praise and prayer that is never silenced; while . . . countless other lips whisper the selfsame song. Every one of the unnumbered legion in Sacred Orders, of every race and nation, whether in centres of civilisation or in lonesome missionary fields, turns at times each day from the toil and cares of his ministry, and, in comforting communion with God, unites his solitary voice with capitular and monastic choirs in the universal melody of the Divine Office."<sup>2</sup>

A text of St. Paul commented on by Cardinal Schuster makes this thought still more striking and suggestive. Theology, he says, has pointed out "that, as the constant presence of the Blessed Sacrament preserved always upon the altar adds to the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass a sense of continuity, so the *laus perennis* unites the Church closely to the divine Victim who is in heaven *always living to make intercession for us* (Heb. vii. 25.)"<sup>3</sup>

Taking the Night Office—Matins and Lauds—as one, the seven divisions of the Divine Office are appropriated to the various periods of the twenty-four hours' day, of which it dedicates the whole and each part, and therefore of life, to God. It goes up in the name of the whole Church, though the

<sup>2</sup>. Bishop Peterson, Preface to Britt's *Dictionary of the Psalter*, London, B.O. & W. 1928.

<sup>3</sup>. *The Sacramentary*, Vol. I, p. 26.



laity take so little part in it. Those priests and religious are our spokesmen and pray on behalf of us all.—Do we appreciate the service they thus render us? Do we even advert to the fact thus sensitively expressed by a Jewish writer?<sup>4</sup>

“There are two torrents that amaze me to consider—the one is Niagara, and the other the stream of prayer falling perpetually in the Roman Catholic Church. What with Masses and the circulating exposition of the Host, there is no day nor moment of the day in which the praises of God are not being sung somewhere: in noble churches, in dim crypts and underground chapels, in cells and oratories. I have been in a great Cathedral, sole congregant, and lo! the tall wax candles were lit, the carven stalls were full of robed choristers, the organ rolled out its sonorous phrases, the priests chanted marching and bowing, the censer swung its incense, the bell tinkled.

Niagara is indifferent to spectators; and so the ever-falling stream of prayer. As steadfastly and unremittingly as God sustains the universe, so steadfastly and unremittingly is He acknowledged, the human antiphony answering the Divine strophe. There be those who can not bear that Niagara should fall and thunder in mere sublimity; but only to such will this falling thunder of prayer seem waste.”

The Divine Office is appropriated to the different seasons of the Church's cycle: recalling in orderly

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<sup>4</sup> I. Zangwill in *Italian Fantasies*, p. 31.

succession all the mysteries of our faith, of the life of Christ and of His Saints. These are remembered—commemorated—as their feasts occur, and God is glorified in them. The Queen of Saints, Our Lady, is specially invoked every day by the *Ave Maria* at the beginning of the Hours and in the anthems at Lauds and Compline.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>. In the Roman Rite. See next page.

### III. THE LITTLE OFFICE OF OUR LADY.

These daily Aves and anthems<sup>1</sup> were inserted in the Divine Office of the Roman Breviary by the Dominican Pope St. Pius V in 1568, as a compensation for the fact that the Little Office of Our Lady then ceased to be obligatory, as it had been earlier, for secular priests.

This Little Office is much shorter than the other, but divided into the same Hours; and analogous, though simpler, in its structure. The recitation of canonical Hours in honour of Our Lady is ancient. The custom was apparently well-established and widespread in the 8th century, being alluded to by the Venerable Bede in England, and made obligatory on the monks of Monte Cassino in Italy by 752 at latest. It is definitely mentioned of St. John Damascene that he recited Our Lady's Hours. This saint violently incensed the iconoclast emperor Leo the Isaurian, between 726 and 730, by his vigorous writing in defence of images and of the Church's sole right to sanction their use; and as a result of a treacherous imperial intrigue, had his right hand cut off by the Caliph of Damascus. The story says that it was miraculously restored by Our Lady. This mention gives colour to the opinion that Our Lady's Office, like all her older festivals and many anthems and versicles in her honour<sup>2</sup> is of Eastern origin. "There is nothing surprising in that", writes a French Dominican, P. Lavocat.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Also recited in the Little Office of the Roman Rite.

2. Cabrol and Leclercq, *Art. Marie Mère de Dieu*.

3. *Année Dominicaine*, May 1933

“The East, the cradle of Christianity, must have preserved a special veneration for the Queen of Heaven. In that land traditions about Mary must have been more living, more numerous, more ancient than in any other land”. P. Lavocat accepts the Ephesus claim—which is much disputed—to the glory of possessing Our Lady’s tomb, and continues : “In the very earliest Christian ages, the Christians of the East professed a filial devotion to the Mother of the Saviour. As we have said, everything in the past led to this. Later, everything likewise tended in the same direction : even the Nestorian heresy which despoiled Mary of her title of Mother of God,—and even the mad impiety of the Iconoclasts, destroying those admirable Byzantine Madonnas, which were so fair an expression of the devotion, the filial reverence, and the art, of the East. It is very probable therefore that the Little Office sprang up among the monks in the East.”

One of the oldest<sup>4</sup> of the devotional additions to the Divine Office that became so numerous in the Middle Ages,—we hear, to mention only a few, of Little Offices of the Holy Cross, the Incarnation, the Holy Trinity, the Holy Ghost, of All Saints,—it was with the Office of the Dead the only one destined to be definitely included in the Church’s official prayer.

St. Peter Damian, who died in 1072, greatly promoted its use in the monasteries. Pope Urban II, in 1095, enjoined its recitation on the clergy and

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<sup>4</sup> Taunton, *The Little Office of Our Lady*, pp. 40ff and Cabrol and Leclercq, *Art. Livres d'heures*.

recommended it to the laity, to ensure the success of the first Crusade. It came to be a favourite devotion of the laity, who grew familiar with it,—as with parts of the Divine Office and other liturgical prayers,—from frequent hearing. It was included in the beautiful manuscript Books of Hours which the privileged few could possess. It spread widely when printing had been invented in the fifteenth century, and was given in English in the Prymers,—prayer-books for the laity. In Caxton's *Book of Courteseye* (1477) "Little John" is urged to say "Our Lady matins" as a daily morning exercise, "while that you be about honestly

To dress yourself and do on your array"; just as Eton scholars also did when they had risen and made their beds. And a traveller, about 1496, tells how he saw women at Mass, "carrying long rosaries in their hands, and any that can read taking the Office of Our Lady with them, and with some companion reciting it in the church verse by verse after the manner of churchmen."

In course of time and in different places various forms of Our Lady's Hours sprang up. What we call the Office of the Roman Rite was fixed by the Breviary of St. Pius V in 1568. But side by side with that Breviary, others were allowed to subsist if they could claim a use of 200 years. Amongst these was the Dominican Breviary, which has preserved an older form of Our Lady's Office. It is similar<sup>5</sup> to that found in the Sarum "use", which

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<sup>5</sup>. Matins as printed by Littlehales in *The Prymer or Lay Folk's Prayer Book*, from Old English uses, is practically identical.

“differs from the Roman in certain particulars, such as antiphons, lessons etc., but the general structure is the same and points to a common origin.”<sup>6</sup> In the Roman Rite, the Little Office has the advantage of greater variety. The year falls into three divisions according to the main epochs of the life of Our Lady: her expectation of the Nativity in Advent, its realisation in the Christmas period, all that prepared or followed it during the rest of the year. These divisions numbered in another order are I. Before Advent, II. Advent, III. After Advent. In the Roman Office they are more clearly and abundantly marked off from one another by different Antiphons, Lessons, and Prayers. Besides, Matins has three Nocturns, (Latin *nocturnum* from *nox* night) which are recited in rotation every week. The Dominican Rite has the advantage of greater simplicity: the Office is so to say more closely knit. Each group of Psalms in every Hour is bound together by a single antiphon, and we have the complete series of Gradual Psalms every day. From this point of view, there is some advantage in approaching the Little Office in its simpler form. But the study of either Rite throws abundant light on the other: many parts are common, and the same elements occur, though in different uses and places.

The earliest Dominican legislation made Our Lady's Office obligatory, but private, except Matins and Compline: Matins was recited before the brethren left the dormitory, Compline was said in choir after the other Compline. There are some

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<sup>6</sup>. Taunton, *The Little Office of Our Lady*, p. 38.



moving stories about it in the *Vitae Fratrum*. This daily obligation was abolished, as being too onerous, at the revision of the Dominican Breviary in 1921. But: "We can console ourselves", writes P. Joret,<sup>7</sup> "by the thought that the intellectual level has risen amongst our Tertiaries, and most of them recite the Office of Our Lady in preference to the original *Paters* and *Aves* . . . . The consciousness that they are supplying the place of the Fathers in this function should act as an encouragement and as an incentive to perseverance." St. Catherine of Siena had a similar thought in her long prayers, and she used to rest when the Fathers of San Domenico went to choir.

Tertiaries, even when they recite the Little Office alone, are using the words of the Church in union with the Church,—that is why so many of the formulas are in the plural,—on behalf of the Church, and especially on behalf of the Dominican family. In praying thus in immediate union with the Church we are praying with Christ, as has been said, and as the Prayer before the Office reminds us; praying in His very words, in the *Pater* and elsewhere as we shall see. A solitary voice is not really solitary; it shares in the power and efficacy promised where there are *two or three gathered together* in Christ's name. However weak, however weary, it swells the chorus of prayer. Moreover, as prayer is necessary to ensure the success of preaching, Tertiaries "are called upon to assist the work of preaching by

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<sup>7</sup> *Dominican Life*, p. 152. This idea can be an inspiration to all who recite the Little Office.

contributing their Office of prayer''.<sup>8</sup> These are stimulating realities for the days when one's mind is inert and one's feeling runs dry—against which we pray in the prayer before the Office, *intellectum illumina, affectum inflamma*<sup>9</sup>—or when one is hurried and altogether inclined to regard the whole thing as a tiresome formality. When our service—*office* means *duty, service*—to God, Our Lady, the Church, and the Order is wearisome and rather grudging, it is certain that others, somewhere, are performing it joyously and fervently.—It may not be amiss to note, in that same prayer before the Office, the Latin word *devote*. The English rendering *devoutly* is perhaps discouraging, as we have come to associate the words *devout* and *devotion* with a state of feeling at times quite unattainable. *Devotedly*, that is, with self-surrender, would be more exact. In the well known hymn *Adoro te devote* it has been well translated *humbly*.<sup>10</sup> Again, several times a day for most of the year we ask our Lady to pray for the *people*, for the *clergy*—and *not* for women in general who are included in the *people* but for religious women, specially *devoted* to God.

The central idea of the Little Office is given in the verses of the Hymn at Lauds: *Vitam datam per virginem Gentes redemptae plaudite*.<sup>11</sup> God's greatest mercy to us, redemption, came through her,—hung on her answer to the angel, *Ecce*

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8. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-7.

9. "Enlighten my understanding, inflame my will."

10. By Canon Mulcahy, *Hymns of the Roman Breviary and Missal*, Dublin, Brown and Nolan. 1938.

11. "Come then, ye ransomed nations, sing  
The life divine, 'twas hers to bring."



*ancilla Domini*<sup>12</sup> by which she accepted the divine maternity. The Invitatory at Matins in the Dominican Rite stresses this truth: *Regem, virginis filium, venite adoremus*.<sup>13</sup> In the Little Office we praise and thank God for His great gifts to Mary and through her to the human race; we congratulate her on her glory and invoke her intercession. The two themes are interwoven, and dominate the Office. Even when, reading the appointed psalms and trying to penetrate their meaning, we do not explicitly refer them to Mary—though this can be done and there is some appropriateness, symbolic or other, of the various psalms to her—the thought of her is implicit. First, because in praising God we are pleasing and praising Mary: how can one please and praise any mother more than by glorifying her son? We know no other way, as the Little Office says expressly in the responsory after the First Lesson at Matins: *with what praises to extol thee I know not, for thou gavest Him from thy bosom whom the heavens could not contain*. Further, but for her and her acceptance of the angel's message we should not be making the spiritual pilgrimage through Christ to God. We have her watchful intercession, and if we may say so with reverence her companionship; for she too trod the pilgrim road. And then in the different Hours we appeal directly to her in the Antiphons and Lessons<sup>14</sup>; and she seems often to answer us directly

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12. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

13. "Our King, a Virgin's Son, O come, let us adore."

14. The Lessons of the Dominican Rite are prayers to Our Lady.

in the Little Chapters.<sup>15</sup> She must have for us in our weakness and difficulties, but in a superior degree, the pity and sympathy that favoured human beings often feel for those less favoured. Above all, she is the Mediatrix of all Graces. "By making use of Our Lady's mediation the liturgy, once again, becomes the primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit."<sup>16</sup>

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15. See Section X.

16. Lefèbvre, *Catholic Liturgy*, p. 159.

#### IV. THE PSALMS.

The Psalms<sup>1</sup> form a very important part of the Church's prayer, and the most considerable part of the Office. We have inherited their use from Old Testament times. We do not perhaps realize fully enough how literally we are the descendants and heirs of the Jews of old. But we must read the Old Testament in the light of the New : Christ *came not to destroy but to fulfil*.

They are divinely inspired. Pius X<sup>2</sup> recalls the hymnody of the heavenly choirs, the prototype of our psalmody, which, says St. Athanasius, teaches men *how and in what terms to praise God worthily* ; and quotes St. Augustine : " in order to be worthily praised by men, God praised Himself ; and because He deigned to praise Himself, man has found the means of praising Him."

They take on an added meaning and sacredness when we advert to the fact that Christ when on earth condescended to pray in those very words ; and Our Lady also. Psalm 112 of our Vespers was sung before the Last Supper. The Magnificat is full of echoes of the Psalms.

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<sup>1</sup>. Father Martindale's *Sweet Singer of Israel* (London, Sheed and Ward, 1940) is a series of vivid and illuminating studies which bring the Psalms, even in their more remote and difficult aspects, very near to us. It should be read by anyone who has begun to explore the world of the liturgy. Father Stephen Brown's *Divine Song Book* (Sands 1926) may serve as an introduction to it and to Dr. Boylan's work. It contains a useful list of books for reference.

<sup>2</sup>. In the Apostolic Constitution *Divino Afflatu*.

As we should expect from prayers inspired by the Holy Ghost, they reveal inexhaustible depths of meaning, and of adaptability to the conditions of our life : ever fresh suggestions and correspondences which often arise out of a passage read before and not fully understood. They present truth "under innumerable aspects and with an infinite possibility of moral application . . . . we can use them to express whatever we would. They respond to our mood of prayer. They are . . . . the fruitful source of a thousand mystical and moral meanings." <sup>3</sup>

They have the strange quality "without losing the common meaning applicable to every age and state", of "awaking in each heart the most individual impressions, and those most adapted to the needs of the moment." <sup>4</sup>

That "common meaning" is what we might call the objective side. On that side, the Psalms are matchless for expressiveness. "Never did a people pray like the people of God", writes Cabrol. <sup>5</sup> "They put into their prayer the note of supplication, of praise, of terror, of love, of intimate communion; they expressed in turn the fear of the soul before the judgments of God, horror of evil and of sin, the anguish of the sinner in the presence of God, but at the same time his boundless confidence in the mercy of his Judge; hatred for the enemies of God, admiration at the sight of His works, the feeling of the weakness of the creature before the divine

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3. Clérissac, *The Spirit of St. Dominic*, p. 66.

4. Hugueny, p. 2.

5. *Prière Antique*, p. 7.

almightiness". The Psalms contain, says St. Basil,<sup>6</sup> "a system of theology": God the Creator, all-powerful, all-present; the God of the living who knows every fold of the heart; just and terrible; but loving, faithful, merciful, helpful, forgiving; men as nothing before Him.

The "individual impressions" depend on something subjective: our responsiveness comes into play. In order to appreciate, even dimly, these wonderful prayers, we must be somewhat receptive: we must have made some beginning of the life of which they are the language. "It is the Christian life, with the normal and continuous play of its motions of faith, hope, charity, penitence, that prepares our hearts to appreciate the Psalms."<sup>7</sup> But then "there is in them a marvellous force (*vis*) . . . which stirs up in souls zeal for all the virtues . . . 'It seems to me that for him who recites them the Psalms are like a mirror in which he may study himself and the motions of his soul, and recite them under the sway of these impressions' (St. Athanasius)."<sup>8</sup>

Yet something more is needed. The text is in part easy: simple and striking. But in other places it offers many difficulties,—which however it will be sheer joy to have overcome. We shall not get very far without some sort of commentary,—a simple commentary to start with, for the abundance and variety of explanations proposed by ancients and moderns might easily bewilder and discourage the

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6. Quoted in *Le Livre de la Prière Antique*, p. 23.

7. Hugueny, p. 3.

8. Pius X in the Apostolic Constitution, *Divino Afflatu*.

best intentioned. We do well first to assimilate the most generally received and simplest interpretations.

Even that we cannot do without a little textual study. Not of course such a study as requires the equipment of a learned Scripture scholar. Something far short of that suffices to remove certain puzzling and distracting obscurities, which are often a positive hindrance to recollection; and to flood the very words—the words that the Church encourages us to make our own—with light and with rich suggestion. God *perfects praise* to Himself—the work of *perfecting* (*per ficere*, to carry through) is gradual—out of the mouths of us (*infantes*) who do not know how to speak it. In this way our spiritual development is subserved, and we can give God something more nearly approaching a *reasonable service*.

And we may add, lest anyone be deterred from some study of words and things, that not only the psalms of the Little Office, but innumerable other psalms and innumerable passages in the Missal will take on fresh light and meaning to reward our pains. It is however useful to note that the wording of the Psalms in the Missal is slightly different from that in the Office. The Missal retains the wording of an earlier, the Vulgate (which except in Psalm 94, the Office follows) that of a later, revision by St. Jerome of the Old Latin Psalter.

There are three principal kinds of difficulty: in the words themselves coloured as they are by languages other than Latin or English; in the manner of their use—the style; and in the things they name and narrate.



As to the words. We can learn a great deal by looking closely at the English text of the psalms. The variant wordings reflect the efforts of one translator after another to express the true and often manifold sense in English, an idiom very different from that of the Latin version, which itself has come through Greek from the original Hebrew. What was clear in Hebrew often appears obscure in another and very dissimilar tongue,—anyone with experience of translation will understand that. We are sometimes even confronted with a mistranslation, as for instance in Psalm 126. A Hebrew word was capable of two meanings and the Greek translator took the less appropriate, rendering *the children of them that have been shaken*, which is hard to understand, instead of the better and simpler sense *the children of youth*.

All commentators point out a grammatical peculiarity of the Hebrew which sometimes causes apparent incoherence in the text. "In Biblical Hebrew", writes Dr. Boylan,<sup>9</sup> "there are—apparently at least—two tenses, the so-called perfect and imperfect (or future). In reality the Hebrew perfect and imperfect do not express the *time* at which the action of the verb takes place, but chiefly the degree of completeness which belongs to the action. Hence both perfect and imperfect can refer to past, present, or future time inasmuch as they can express that an action is complete, or being still performed, in the present, past or future." For example in Ps. 119, *I was peaceable, I spoke, the*

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<sup>9</sup> *The Psalms*, Vol. I, pp. xxviii & xxix.



whole verse may equally well stand in the present. This indefiniteness greatly enriches the possible applications of the words we use; so that it is not a matter of mere grammatical curiosity. And it explains why our English version sometimes switches so abruptly from one tense to another.

As to the style. The Psalms are Hebrew poetry, and have in the highest degree the qualities that distinguish poetry from prose. Words are used figuratively, — in bold metaphors, unexpected comparisons; or they are suffused with emotion. Ideas are set forth, not in order with matter-of-fact consecutiveness, but with flashes of imagination, interruptions, exclamations, repetitions, rapid transitions: the phrasing reproduces all the swift processes of thought and feeling. Sudden changes of speaker, short dialogues, are introduced. All great and true poetry suggests more than it merely says—suggests indeed more and more as we grow familiar with it, rise to its heights, and penetrate its depths. And if that is true of great human poetry, how much more of the inspired Psalms! Here really, the limits of suggestion—as P. Clérissac has told us—are set by our capacity to respond: “we can use them to express whatever we would.”

Thirdly, there are things in the Psalms that can only be understood if we know something of the time and country of the inspired writers: facts, places, the immediate occasion of the poem; if we grasp, in short, its literal sense. Certain imagery, too, is understandable only in that way. Some figures appeal to us quite simply: perhaps because our ordinary language is already impregnated with

them. We understand when the troubles of life are compared to a raging torrent, our soul to a bird escaping from the fowler's net, our enemies to a devouring monster; but why does a *horn* mean power and strength, and a *lamp* posterity? Further, the sense both real and figurative often goes beyond any possibility of direct literal application: the psalm becomes prophetic, and such psalms "light up vividly for us the divine physiognomy of Christ."<sup>10</sup> Indeed St. Augustine<sup>11</sup> heard the voice of Christ our Redeemer "in all the Psalms, singing or lamenting, rejoicing in hope or grieving in present reality."

These things are notably exemplified in Psalms 109 and 131.

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<sup>10</sup>. Cabrol, *Prière Antique*, p. 211.

<sup>11</sup>. Quoted by Pius X, in *Divino Afflatu*.

## V. THE NIGHT OFFICE : MATINS AND LAUDS

Matins, with Lauds which are a prolongation of Matins, used, as has been said, to be called Vigils : thus continuing even in name the night-watches of the early Church. Soon after midnight, at the beginning of the new day, the Office began. Matins corresponds more strictly to the night-watch, and Lauds to daybreak. This is indicated in the Sunday hymns of the Divine Office. At Matins for instance :<sup>1</sup>

Let us, all sloth dispelled amain,  
Arise, yet ere the eastern rays,  
And, in the night, lift hands in praise,  
As holy prophet doth ordain.

.....

May He endow with gifts of grace  
His servants here who, singing, pray,  
In this most holy time of day,  
The hours when peace doth all embrace.

And at Lauds :

Braced for the fray, let us arise ;  
The cock's shrill clarion stirs the prone,  
Rebukes the sluggard's heavy eyes,  
Invites deniers to atone.

The change of name is reflected in the Vulgate Latin

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<sup>1</sup>. Translated by Canon Mulcahy, *op. cit.* These stanzas occur in the Roman Rite. The Matins hymn is by Pope Gregory the Great, the Lauds hymn by St. Ambrose.

of Psalm 62 : *Si memor fui tui super stratum meum, in matutinis meditabor in te*<sup>2</sup>, where the Hebrew sense is *night-vigils*. How much the words thus gain in meaning if they recur in dark sleepless moments, or in the early morning when one hears the cock-crow and the first birds!

In some religious orders, the Office is still sung at night. This is not practicable for most of those who recite the Little Office. It is suggested as an approximation to recite Matins the last thing at night and Lauds early in the morning, for the Church begins her new day at sunset, as we see by Eves and First Vespers, and allows Matins and Lauds to be separated.

This part of the Little Office, more than any other, widens our spiritual outlook, turns us from a narrow concern with our own interests and even those of others, makes us look up to God, to His greatness, to the mighty realities of the lasting spiritual world in which our ephemeral human lives are engaged. The central idea of our Matins and Lauds might be expressed in the jubilant words of Psalm 46 : *Sing praises to our Lord, sing ye; sing praises to our King, sing ye; for God is the King of all the earth: sing ye wisely*; the theme of awestruck adoration being dominant in Matins, that of exultant praise in Lauds.<sup>3</sup>

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2. "When I think of Thee on my couch And muse on Thee in the early morning" (Dr. Boylan's translation).

3. This refers more particularly to the first Nocturn, common to the Roman and Dominican Rites. For the other two Nocturns, see Appendix.

## (1) MATINS.

Adoration is the first, necessary, and when we think of it natural, attitude of the creature. But because we forget it, we invite one another in spirit if not in actual fact, to come and adore.<sup>4</sup> We do this in what is called the Invitatory, partly or wholly repeated like an echoing refrain, after each verse of the first psalm. *Venite adoremus Dominum*<sup>5</sup> was the call by which the monks were awakened for the Office; and in the Mozarabic Liturgy, that is, in Spain, the word *sonus* (sound) was used of it as if to signify the bell that calls to the Church.<sup>6</sup> The four psalms develop the theme of adoration.

## Psalm 94.

We draw near in spirit, adoring and singing joyfully to God, because He is so great, so mighty, so faithful to His people. We come in suppliant repentance also, because like the Israelites of old, we have hardened our hearts and irritably resented His will. Let us listen to-day, if we would escape the fate of being shut out from God's rest. Each day, in some happening, in some word heard or read, for instance, in the Missal, God speaks to us.

This psalm is illustrated by Psalm 80, and by St. Paul's words to the Ephesians (v, 18 & 19): *Be ye filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in*

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<sup>4</sup>. This invitation is replaced in the Roman Rite by the *Ave Maria*.

<sup>5</sup>. "Come let us adore the Lord".

<sup>6</sup>. Catholic Encyclopaedia, Art, *Invitatorium*.

*your hearts to the Lord.*—St. Paul explains the urgent invitation to listen to God's voice *to-day* in his letter to the Hebrews (iii & iv).—The allusions to *provocation* and *temptation* are to the incident in the desert, when the Israelites murmured against Moses because they lacked water, and tempted God by asking impatiently : *Is the Lord amongst us or not?* (Ex. xvii, 7).—The *forty years* are the forty years of wandering in the desert and God's rest is the Promised Land.—The Israelites were, and we are now, the sheep of God's pasture.—Phrases beginning with *if* often express not a condition but a heartfelt wish. Dr. Boylan translates : "If ye would hear His voice to-day!"

#### Psalm 8.

The greatness of God whom we adore is visible all over the earth and especially in the starry night heavens. It is given even to the most insignificant to praise and reveal Him : indeed the insignificant, even we ourselves, are sometimes chosen for the privilege. At the spectacle of the universe, man trembles to feel himself so little ; yet he has been lifted up above God's other works and made master of nature. Man's power and authority : all genius, talent, invention : is God's gift and an evidence of His greatness. Man is also the priest of creation, voicing its tribute of praise to God.

Our Lord quoted this psalm against the chief priests and scribes (Matt. xxi, 16) who were indignant because the children cried *Hosanna to the son of David* in the Temple.—*The enemy*



*and the avenger* are the raging enemies of God.—This psalm is quoted in a Messianic sense by St. Paul (Hebrews ii, 6-8).—"What is true of man generally must be true in the deepest and highest sense of the Man who sums up all things in Himself". *Son of Man* is "the poetical equivalent or parallel of 'man'" (Boylan).—After the Sacred Humanity of Christ, God is most admirable in Mary, a universe in herself, the most wonderfully *visited* of mere creatures, beneath whose feet on her throne in heaven the world is subjected. (Wolter).—These thoughts are suggested by the antiphon—antiphons<sup>7</sup> serve to guide us to a meaning of the psalm—in the Roman Rite, which is found in the Dominican Rite after the third psalm of this Nocturn.

#### Psalm 18.

God's adorable greatness is so visible in the wonders of the universe, that none can fail to hear them speak of Him. The most glorious created thing, the sun, is a symbol of God's glory and God's law. His revelation shines for all, we have only to expose ourselves to the rays of light and heat. His law is pure, soul-quickenings, trustworthy, clear, enlightening, unfailingly right and lovable and bringing a rich reward.—Who therefore can understand sins? Who can know how often he has broken the law? But God can purify, preserve, help and rescue.

This psalm is illustrated by Psalms 103 and 118, and by Matt. xi, 25.—*Each day and each*

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<sup>7</sup>. See p. 84, and also pp. 40 and 67.



night brings its fresh tribute of praise.—St. Paul says of the preachers of the Gospel (Rom. x, 18) that *their sound has gone forth into all the earth*.—"The Vulgate says that God has set up His own tent in the sun, i.e. God's glory and majesty are peculiarly manifested in the sun" (Boylan).—The words *testimonium* (testimony or command), *justitiae* (justices or ordinances), *praeceptum* (commandment or precept), *judicia* (judgments) are so many synonyms for the law.—Where we have *sins*, Lat. *delicta*, (which means faults of omission) the Hebrew sense is *sins of inadvertence*.—The word *alienis* corresponds to a Hebrew word meaning *the proud* (Boylan) or *sins of pride* (Wolter).—*The greatest sin* means very great or heinous sins.—The Roman Antiphon runs: *Like the choicest myrrh, thou hast yielded an odour of sweetness, O holy Mother of God. Myrrh denotes mortification and penance which repair the destruction wrought by sin. The antiphon is appropriate to her who surpassed all others in fidelity to God's law, and was the instrument of our redemption. It "gives us a thought about the Queen of Martyrs" (Taunton). We find it in the Dominican Rite in the Little Chapter at Vespers.*<sup>8</sup>

### Psalm 23.

God, whom we adore, has completest rights over all that He has created, things and men. We shall reach him by purity of heart and hand, by doing

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<sup>8</sup>. See page 87.

truth<sup>9</sup> and by keeping our thoughts from vain things : earnestness and sincerity, high purpose and uprightness, are the opposites of vanity and guile: If we open up, high and wide, the gates of our being, i.e. our intelligence and will, the King of Glory will enter in.

This psalm is illustrated by Psalm 14 and by a moving passage from Isaias, chap. ii, 3-5.—*The mountain of the Lord* is literally Mount Sion, but for us it is *the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem* (Heb. xii, 22).—*To take one's soul in vain* is to set it on vain things.—*Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ*, we sing in the *Te Deum*.—P. Hugueny points out that the words *Lord of Hosts* have not always a specifically martial meaning: the beings that people the world, sky, earth, and sea, are called in the Hebrew text of Gen. ii, 1, *the hosts of heaven and earth*.—The gates, literally, are the great, venerable gates of the Temple, of which Solomon said (III Kings, viii, 13) *Building I have built a house for Thy dwelling, to be Thy most firm throne for ever*.—The Roman Antiphon is: *Before the couch of this Virgin sing often unto us sweet chants with solemnity*, suggesting (Taunton) the sweet songs which the Beloved sings to the Spouse in the Canticle of Canticles. Mary is the purest of all creatures, closest in union with her Maker, the King of Glory.

*Te Deum*.

Matins, Lauds, Vespers, Compline, each follow

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<sup>9</sup>. Cf. Epistle for Thursday of the first week of Lent from Ezechiel (xviii).

up the psalms with a canticle of praise. The last part of the *Te Deum*, from *O Lord save Thy people* to the end, is made up of invocations, mostly scriptural. The first part is of very early Christian origin: the tradition that it was improvised by St. Ambrose at the baptism of St. Augustine is unsupported. It is a very ancient prayer of thanksgiving and praise, akin to the Preface at Mass. "It is perhaps, along with our Sunday Preface, one of the most faithful echoes of the first part of the Eucharistic prayer which, in the first centuries, ended the solemn liturgical vigil of Sunday". (Hugueny) It now concludes the night-watch, Matins, of the Office.

From men and angels goes up the adoring cry *Holy, Holy, Holy*, to God (*Deum*), our Master (*Dominum*), whom we acknowledge, our Father (*Patrem*) whom we trust. Apostles, prophets, martyrs, adore the Holy Trinity. We sing of Christ, the King of Glory, and our redemption by Him. We implore His mercy, we praise Him daily (*in singulos dies*), we ask to be saved from sin to-day (*die isto*).

## (2) LAUDS.

Our psalms for Lauds are used at Sunday Lauds for a great part of the year in the Divine Office. The theme of praise (*laudes* means praises) runs through them in a sort of crescendo, and becomes exuberant in the Canticle of the Three Children and Psalm 148. This exultancy corresponds to the hour. It was at a Sunday dawn that Christ rose from the dead. It is the dawn of a new day after the dark

night, described with rousing freshness in the hymn already quoted. The psalms gain in meaning when recited in this morning mood, and contain many things that adapt themselves to preparation and thanksgiving for Holy Communion.

Psalm 92.

God rules from eternity in power and beauty, and the world is His throne. We can understand this specially of Christ who rose in power and beauty, whose throne is the Church, then the tabernacle, then our hearts. The roaring floods are wonderful and mighty, but God's power is beyond anything they can suggest. The surging waters remind us also of the revolt of God's enemies; and of the storms and terrors of life: but God and His Christ are above all. They may further typify Christ's messengers, flooded with grace and lifting their voices like those of the waters. God's house, not only the Temple but His other house the Church, and all its members, must be perseveringly holy.

This psalm is illustrated by Psalms 28, 96, 98; and by verses from Job (xxxviii, 8-11): *Who shut up the sea with doors . . . ? I set my bounds around it, and made it bars and doors: And I said: 'Hitherto thou shalt come, and shalt go no further, and here thou shalt break thy swelling waves'.*—"The 'testimonies' of the Lord are the various manifestations of His will" (Boylan) as in Psalm 18.

Psalm 99.

The whole earth should rejoice in God; but we especially have reason to exult, to sing, to jubilate in

God's presence : for He is our Maker and our watchful Shepherd. He has arranged all and permitted all. Therefore, trust Him (*Adjutorium nostrum*), bless Him (*Benedicamus Domino*), thank Him (*Deo gratias*).<sup>10</sup> He is sweet, eternally merciful, eternally true and faithful.

This psalm is illustrated by the familiar Psalm 116, *Laudate Dominum, omnes gentes*,<sup>11</sup> and by Psalms 94, 146, 117, and 22, *He hath set me in a place of pasture etc.*—The metaphor is developed by Isaias (xlix) in a passage read at Mass on Saturday of the 4th week in Lent : *They shall feed in the ways and their pastures shall be in every plain. They shall not hunger, nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor the sun strike them ; for He that is merciful to them shall be their shepherd, and at the fountains of water He shall give them to drink.*<sup>12</sup>—The insistence on joy is found in Ecclesiasticus (xxx, 23) : *The joyfulness of the heart is the life of a man and a never-failing treasure of holiness : and the joy of a man is length of life.* And in St. Paul (Phil. iv. 4) : *Rejoice in the Lord always : again I say : Rejoice.* And (II Corinthians ix, 7) *God loveth a cheerful giver.*

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<sup>10</sup>. "Our help" ; "let us bless the Lord" ; "Thanks be to God"

<sup>11</sup>. "Praise the Lord, all ye nations". See p. 106.

<sup>12</sup>. See also the Epistle of the first Monday in Lent, from Ezechiel (xxxiv). The frequency of this lovely imagery is **very** striking, and throws much light on the Parable of the Good Shepherd.



## Psalm 62.

The soul watches for God from the dawn (*de luce*), cleaves to God. The intelligence (*anima*, soul) thirsts for God; the lonely human being (*caro*, flesh) in every craving longs for God, and this longing urges to prayer. His power and glory are most apparent, best revealed and adored, in His sanctuary—of old the Temple, now the Church. He satisfies us; He is our companion in the night-watches, our helper, our shelter, our support (*suscepit*, He has taken us up) and guidance in the day. He will vanquish our enemies.

This psalm is illustrated by Psalms 41, 142, 72, 35.—The future tenses, *I will bless, praise, meditate, rejoice*, and the perfects *hath thirsted, have remembered, hath received*, may all equally well have a present sense.—The word *lives* is a literal translation from Hebrew; the sense is *life*.—"The praise of the Lord . . . is a greater joy than that of sharing in the rich meats . . . of the sacrificial banquets." (Boylan)—*If I have remembered* is not really a conditional phrase, Dr. Boylan translates: "When I think of Thee on my couch."—*The lower parts of the earth* are the underworld, death. The enemies of the psalmist will fall on the battlefield, to be devoured by jackals: the Hebrew word bears this meaning: while those who are true to him will triumph.—The king is probably David, and the psalm may be explained as a literal expression of David's distress and trust in God at the moment when he fled through the desert

before the revolt of his son Absalom (II Kings, 15). Our King is Christ.

Benedicite and Psalm 148.

The Canticle of the Three Children and Psalm 148 are songs of pure praise, of inspiration analogous to that of St. Francis' *Canticle of the Sun*. The Canticle in the book of Daniel was probably modelled on the psalm. It has three divisions, with the refrain : *praise and exalt Him above all for ever*. The angels and the heavens, then all creatures on earth, then the children of men are called on to praise God ; and amongst these especially Israel (that is, the Church), the priests and servants of God, the holy and humble, and lastly the three young men (representing ourselves) who are experiencing the immediate protection of God. In this poem "man lends his soul to inanimate things . . . or rather things project into our soul their tiny reflection of divine goodness and beauty, . . . awakening thus in us sentiments of admiration and filial gratitude" (Hugueny).

Psalm 148 is more explanatory. The praise of God is to rise from the heavens, which show forth His immutable laws ; from the earth, where His creatures fulfil His word. Kings and princes, peoples and judges, men and women, young and old, but especially Israel, owe Him a hymn for his greatness, His mercies to His people, His nearness.

This psalm is illustrated by Psalms 64, 102, 32.—*He hath made a decree and it shall not pass away : we accept it when we say Thy will be done.*—The *hosts* are here the angels.— The



*heavens of heavens* are the highest heavens.—“The horn in the scriptures signifies strength, power and glory”, says the Douay note on I Kings, Chap. 2, where Anna thanks God for her son: *My heart hath rejoiced in the Lord, and my horn is exalted in my God.* The metaphor is from the horns of animals, which are their strong defence, and it occurs frequently. We have it again in the Benedictus, and in Psalm 131, used of the Messiah.—Dr. Boylan translates the last verse: “’Tis a theme of praise for all His saints.”

In Lauds of the Roman Rite Psalms 92, 99, and 62, the Benedicite, and Psalm 148 have each an antiphon. They are different in the three periods of the year. The first set of five is taken from the Office of the Assumption, the second set from that of the Annunciation, the third from that of the Circumcision: the annual feast of the Circumcision retains traces in the Mass and Office of an older feast, instituted to make a special commemoration of Christ's Mother on the octave of His birth.

The choice of Antiphons provides thoughts of praise to Our Lady for the three divisions of the year (Taunton).

I. Before Advent:—the first celebrates her assumption; the second her place in heaven beside the starry throne of the King of kings; the third (*the odour of thy ointments* recalls Canticle of Canticles i, 3 and the imagery of Psalm 44) her glory and sweetness; the fourth, her ministry in giving us the Fruit of Life; the fifth, her beauty and power.

II. Advent :—the five antiphons are taken directly from the first chapter of St. Luke.

III. After Advent :—the first (which occurs as antiphon to the Magnificat in the Dominican Rite) celebrates the wonder of the union of the Divine with the human; the second speaks of the realization of a scripture type, the dew coming down from heaven on Gedeon's fleece (Judges, chapter vi); the third compares Mary's inviolate virginity to the bush that Moses saw on fire but not burnt (Ex.iii.2); the fourth recalls the prophecies now fulfilled of a flower from the root of Jesse (Isaias xi), of a Star out of Jacob (Numbers xxiv), of a Child born of a Virgin, (Isaias vii); the fifth is a cry of pure joy : *Behold, Mary hath borne us the Saviour, whom John beholding, exclaimed : Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world, Alleluia.*

Four of the Antiphons used at Lauds are repeated during the day, one in each of the Little Hours.

Benedictus.

Zachary's glorious canticle gives thanks for the accomplishment of the Messianic prophecies and announces the mission of St. John the Baptist. It has a deeper and more moving meaning for us, who have seen the complete fulfilment of the prophecies and the mission. God, according to His promises made through the prophets, has *visited* us in His mercy, sent us a Redeemer and a King (*a horn of salvation*). He has rescued and will rescue us in His mercy from all that is hostile to us, enabling us to serve Him in peace, trust, holiness, justice. The

priests of the Church, coming after John the Baptist, prepare Christ's ways, teach, remit sins. The Orient (Christ, like the rising sun in the East) from on high lights up our darkness and leads us into the way of peace. The Benedictus is a whole meditation on the conditions of our personal spiritual life.

This Canticle is illustrated by Isaias, Chap. ix: *The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light* etc., and that other marvellous chapter lx: *Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem, for thy light is come* etc. It is, like the Magnificat, largely woven of quotations or reminiscences from the Old Testament. The promises made to the house of David are fully realized only in the Church.

## VI. THE GRADUAL PSALMS.

Spread three by three over the Hours of Prime, Terce, Sext, None, and Compline in the Little Office according to the Dominican Rite, are the fifteen Psalms called Gradual Psalms, which form a distinct series. The word *gradual*, from the Latin *gradus*, a step, translates a Hebrew word that has been variously interpreted. But the most widely accepted explanation is that these were pilgrimage songs, sung on the up-hill journey, the ascent, to Jerusalem—as well as on the return—by pilgrim Jews from Palestine or more distant places, who were visiting the holy city on the three great festivals of the Pasch, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. It was on the occasion of one of these festivals that the Boy-Christ accompanied Joseph and Mary, and stayed behind in the Temple ; and on another that the Apostles spoke the wonderful works of God in divers tongues before Parthians, Medes, Elamites etc., (Acts ii).

“ The Fathers ”, says the *Catholic Dictionary* “ as well as later Catholic writers. . . regarded these Psalms as marking the steps by which the soul ascends to God.” There is the same symbolism in Psalm 83, 6 : *Blessed is the man whose help is from thee : in his heart he hath disposed to ascend by steps.* The spiritual ascent and its goal are thus defined by St. Jerome : “ The fifteen Gradual Psalms lead us by certain progressive advances to the highest things, so that we may be able to say in the courts of the Lord : Behold now bless ye the Lord : all ye servants

of the Lord in the courts of the house of God".<sup>1</sup>

Our life is in a very real sense a pilgrimage: we have not here an abiding city but are journeying to the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Moreover: we may regard a single day as a sort of synopsis of life, a complete and rounded whole. From this point of view the recitation each day of all the Gradual Psalms has a peculiar advantage and appropriateness. It is in accordance with an old monastic tradition not however preserved in the Little Office of the Roman Rite.<sup>2</sup> We shall see this appropriateness better, and realize how rich they are in analogies and suggestions, if we briefly remind ourselves of what Jerusalem and the Temple were to the Israelites.

After the death of Saul, the first king of Israel, David reigned for seven years and six months in Hebron over Juda only, while a son of Saul, Isboseth, ruled the rest of Israel. Isboseth was murdered, and David, having punished the murderers, reigned for a further thirty-three years over the whole country. He was victorious over all his enemies. He took Jerusalem with its seemingly impregnable mountain stronghold of Sion from the Jebusites—a tribe of the old Canaanitish blood,—and made it his capital. He *dwelt in the castle* (i.e. fortress), *and called it the City of David*: and *built round about from Mello and inwards* (II Kings, v,9). Hiram, king of Tyre, whose dominion included Sidon and extended to the mountain range

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<sup>1</sup>. Quoted by Dr. Boylan.

<sup>2</sup>. See p. 48.



of Lebanon<sup>3</sup> famous for its cedar forest, sent cedar-wood and carpenters and masons for the fortifications and the buildings; for he desired to be on good terms with this new and powerful neighbour, and the Sidonians were well-known artificers, while the Israelites, wanderers and warriors, were inexpert in the arts of strong and beautiful building. *And they built a house for David.* That was the beginning of the greatness of Jerusalem,—with which the Psalms and the Prophets often equate the name Sion. It was henceforward the centre, not only of the national but of the religious life of the Israelites.

David's first care was to bring the Ark of the Covenant from Cariathiarim, where it had stayed since it was recovered from the Philistines. He pitched a tabernacle for it within the city: a tabernacle, that is a tent, the portable shelter of the journeying in the desert. But one day he said to the prophet Nathan (II Kings vii, 2): *Dost thou see that I dwell in a house of cedar, and the ark of God is lodged within skins?* For this spontaneous desire to do Him honour, God, through the mouth of the prophet, promised him blessings on his posterity, and that his son should build a house for God, and that his throne should be established for ever: promises partly realised in Solomon, who built and dedicated the Temple; but fully only in Christ, "the builder of the true temple, which is the Church, His everlasting kingdom, which shall never fail". (Douay note).

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3. Libanus, in the Latin of the Vulgate.

"The site chosen by David", says a modern writer,<sup>4</sup> "for his chief city was admirable for defence by reason of the deep ravines that encircled it on three sides." Moreover it "was protected by a nearer and a more remote circle of hills". *Mountains are round about it*, says Psalm 124. "Solomon enlarged and embellished the Jerusalem of his father David, until it became rich and beautiful and strong, well worthy of the admiration and affection which its inhabitants ever afterwards felt for it". And not only its inhabitants, but all true Israelites who remained loyal to the faith of their fathers,—*Upon the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept when we remembered Sion*, mourns Psalm 136. And Jeremias, in the familiar words sung at Tenebrae, laments its desolation: *How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! How is the mistress of the Gentiles become as a widow... The ways of Sion mourn, because there are none that come to the solemn feast: all her gates are broken down...*

To Jerusalem, in happier times, *went up the tribes, the tribes of the Lord: the testimony of Israel*—that is, the law laid down for Israel,—*to praise the name of the Lord*; they rejoiced at seeing the well-built city, *compact together*, and prayed for the brethren and the neighbours, and for peace and prosperity within its turreted walls. God himself had *strengthened the bolts of its gates*; and chosen it for His own dwelling-place, and promised to bring forth in it a mighty successor, a *horn*, to David.

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<sup>4</sup> A. W. Cooke, *Palestine in Geography and History*, Vol. II, p. 81.



The world has seen the fulfilment of that promise. The *horn* is Christ, the Messiah. Jerusalem typified the Church, God's own city on earth, *a city seated on a mountain, that cannot be hid*. (Matth. v, 14).

"The Jerusalem of stone and mortar, of flesh and blood, gives place henceforward to an invisible Jerusalem, in which souls are built together through love on the foundation of Christ. Sion is no longer the citadel of Jebus, the hold of a barbarian tribe; it is no longer the city enlarged by a prosperous king, nor the people who inhabit and make one with it; it is something more even than the sacred hill whence the Spirit of renewal, having first come down into the Supper-Room, started forth to revolutionize the world. It is the community of faithful spirits grouped round their Master. It is the Communion of Saints, ending at last in the state of that Communion in glory, the heavenly Jerusalem glimpsed at Patmos".<sup>5</sup> The Temple with the Ark was the type and forerunner of our churches with the Real Presence; Israel, chosen for great privileges and great responsibilities, of us, God's chosen people: *He hath not done in like manner to every nation*.

In his commentary on these psalms, Wolter picks out from the Fathers of the Church a purely spiritual interpretation of the *ascent by steps* in the fifteen psalms, as follows. Psalm 119 expresses the sense of our misery; 120, courage and hearty readiness to serve God; 121, thanksgiving for forgiveness and

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<sup>5</sup>. Sertillanges, *Ce que Jésus voyait du haut de la croix*, p. 45. Compare with all this the beautiful Mass for the fourth Sunday in Lent, *Lactare* Sunday.

desire of union with God ; 122, keeping our eyes on God in our troubles ; 123, thanksgiving for God's mercy and deliverance from the danger of sin ; 124, patience and confidence in trial ; 125, comfort in suffering ; 126, humility : all good is from God ; 127, fear of the Lord and consequent peace ; 128, patience and the spirit of self-sacrifice ; 129, penitence, acknowledgment of sin ; 130, deep humility ; 131, the building up of God's dwelling in ourselves and others ; 132, the service of others by spiritual and corporal works of mercy ; 133, continual prayer.

Twelve of the Gradual Psalms, from 119 to 130, are used in the Roman Rite. They begin at Terce. The psalms for Prime are :<sup>6</sup> Psalm 53, from Prime of the Divine Office ; the Messianic Psalm 84 ; and the short Psalm 116, of thanksgiving.

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<sup>6</sup>. See Appendix.

## VII. THE DAY HOURS

In a very beautiful and stimulating chapter on the *Sequence of the Hours*, P. Joret<sup>1</sup> dwells on the deep meaning of this subdivision of our prayer, and insists on the advantages of observing it, if possible.

The first, third, sixth, and ninth hour—these are the Roman divisions of the day,<sup>2</sup> and quite approximately, would be our 6, 9, 12, and 3 o'clock—punctuate our busy, perhaps our fussy, activity. “Into the very midst of these noisy hours, so crowded with ambitions, envy, frivolities, vexations, and worries, we must manage to insert a little calmness and prayer”.—“At every hour of the day the one thing necessary is to maintain union with Our Lord”—a thought stressed also by P. Clérissac<sup>3</sup> who writes, “When the Eucharistic Elements have ceased to be present within us there still remains in the soul an invisible influence of the soul of Jesus Christ . . . What then could better preserve in us the precious power of that influence than the daily practice of liturgical prayer?” What follows is an attempt to correspond with these suggestions, through a short analysis<sup>4</sup> of the psalms of our Day Hours.

The psalms are all good to be recited at any time

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1. *Dominican Life*, pp. 173 and 175.

2. They are always used in the New Testament.

3. *The Spirit of St. Dominic*, p. 71.

4. This analysis is based, following P. Joret, on the Dominican arrangement of the Gradual Psalms. But the ideas are easily applicable to the next succeeding Hour.

—we do in fact repeat two of the Gradual Psalms at Vespers—and they adapt themselves as we have seen to very varying situations. They express our essential attitudes towards God,—adoration, praise, dependence, repentance, petition, and so on. But our powers of attention and realisation are so soon exhausted, our moods are so changeable, our minds so easily distracted, that it is of the utmost help to find that we are able and are encouraged to concentrate on one or other of these attitudes which seem more easily assumed and more appropriate at certain moments of the day. It is an advantage too, thus to cultivate moods of prayer, which either lift up and transform those moods that are natural to us, or counteract them when they are depressing and discouraging : we can thus better control or endure or discount them. The hymns of the Divine Office for the Little Hours, constantly recurring and easy to memorise, as well as the Vespers and Compline hymns, are a powerful help in this direction.<sup>5</sup>

Matins and Lauds correspond to the quietness of night and early morning when, undistracted, we can perhaps lift up our minds to God and sometimes think : *Lord, it is good for us to be here*. But we cannot stay on the heights. The new day of activity—not necessarily external and visible activity ; the contacts of life are able to produce inward reactions in us,—begins.

#### (1) PRIME.

Prime is this beginning, a sort of programme, the

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<sup>5</sup>. Their character will be seen from some translations given in the Appendix, pp. 108ff.

anticipation in a sense of the day's dangers, helps, and hope. Each day we start as it were afresh, in a country of exile and difficulty (Ps. 119) the journey (Ps. 120) which will bring us (Ps. 121) to the gates of the City. There is a beautiful and all-embracing prayer in the Divine Office at Prime; *Dies et actus nostros in sua pace disponat Dominus omnipotens.*<sup>6</sup>

### Psalm 119.

We begin with a sober fear, born of knowledge, and call on God pressingly, but with confidence in prayer, to protect us in the strife of evil tongues, and in the trying contacts of life. We pray to be kept, ourselves, absolutely true in word and act, patient, peaceful, and gentle.—Mary is the Queen of Peace, and the model of patience.

This psalm is illustrated by Psalms 17, 51, 63; and by St. James, iii, on the tongue.—The *sharp arrows* and the *coals* are a metaphor for sure retribution.—The *coals that lay waste* are explained as broom-fires, set in vengeance to the homes of nomads.—Amongst the *inhabitants of Cedar*, hostile nomads of Arabia, the Israelites would be unhappy. Dr. Boylan thinks the words are literal, spoken by a wanderer; P. Hugueny thinks they may be figurative, as when we call objectionable people Hottentots.—The last two verses cover all tribulation, from mere daily annoyances to the uttermost distress and suffering.

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6. "May the Almighty Lord dispose our days and our deeds in His peace." (Roman Rite).



## Psalm 120.

But we look up to the hills of God, and our fear is tempered by the reflection that—the Maker of heaven and earth keeps untiring watch over us, keeps us from stumbling, shades us (*the sun shall not burn*), wards off evil influences (*nor the moon*), guides our comings and goings to the end. We look up to Sion, i.e. the Church, the seat of teaching and of grace.—We look up to Mary, lifted above all creatures, as the mountains above the plains.

This psalm is illustrated by Psalms 65 and 90 and by *Isaias* xxv. The pilgrim's journey was over hot plains and difficult mountain paths.—The *mountains* are literally those of Jerusalem to which his feet were set.—*To be moved* means to slip or stumble.—From Sion God sent out his blessing, as we are told in Psalm 132; from heaven and His city the Church He does so now.—Israel was, we now are, God's own people.—The moon was widely supposed to have a baneful influence : cf. *moon-struck* and *lunatic*.

## Psalm 121.

And we are gladdened by the thought of the goal of our journey.—But *Jerusalem* is not merely the ultimate goal, our home in heaven. We are gladdened also by being within God's city on earth, the Church. We begin the day by going, really or in spirit, into God's house to praise Him, with our fellow Catholics, *the tribes of Israel*. We pray that He may give His Church peace, -and bless her friends; that we may all be at peace, and God's glory be revealed to the world.—We go to Mary



also, the living temple of the Lord; and we go in pilgrimage to her shrines.

The words *were standing* have not really a past sense. Dr. Boylan translates: "Even now stand our feet in thy gates, O Jerusalem."—The words *testimony of Israel* mean the *law for Israel*, as in Psalm 18.—*Their seats have sat in judgment* is difficult. Dr. Boylan translates: "For there stood the thrones for judgment, the thrones of David's house", the *thrones* being the judges seats; and explains that "probably the going-up to Jerusalem for worship at the three great feasts was associated also, to some extent, with the settlement of difficult legal problems by the central legal authorities in the capital".—The Church, like Jerusalem, is as a city compact together, strong, united, where we dwell with our brethren. St. Catherine of Siena held faith in the Church to be the most essential article of faith.

## (2) TERCE.

By the third hour, we are already perhaps beginning to feel the strain of the day's worries and occupations, the cares—often so much more distracting than the pleasures—of the world. The morning post and the morning paper and the first contacts may have brought disappointments, annoyances, surprises at oneself; contradictions to our opinions, even to our convictions. We begin, or we fear, to fall short of our duties, our graces, our moments of illumination, our vocation . . . The

Psalms of Terce breathe dependence on God, and the renewed assertion of our trust. *Benedictionem dabit legislator, He that hath given the law will give His blessing*, as we read in Psalm 83. At the third hour the Apostles were strengthened by the descent of the Holy Ghost.

Psalm 122.

Amidst the daily trials of life which we must bear as the consequence of our sins, and which make us feel *filled with contempt*, or *sated with shame* as Dr. Boylan translates, we lift up our eyes to God, to whom we look for mercy. He will be moved by our pleading submission.—Mary was the handmaid of the Lord, her eyes were turned on God in love and submission.

This psalm is illustrated by Psalms 120 and 130. The *servants* here were slaves, exposed to punishment at the hands of their masters.—The *rich* and the *proud* were perhaps the oppressors of Israel; they stand for our temptations and trials.

Psalm 123.

We know, even by experience, that God will rescue us, for many times already He has brought us through temptations, difficulties, dark moods, sudden dangers, which would otherwise have been insupportable. May He be blessed. Our help is in His name.—Mary, saved from all dangers of earth by her Immaculate Conception “looks down from heaven to earth in admiring recognition of the unique immaculate purity with which God adorned her”

(Wolter). She now saves us in danger, the Help of Christians.

This psalm is illustrated by Psalms 93, 17, 68. The expressive imagery : enemies devouring like wild beasts, ensnaring like the bird-catcher, sweeping along like a raging torrent : shows that *no danger need affright us*.—The last verse is very familiar, at the beginning of Mass and in liturgical blessings, for all blessing is from God and the object of blessings is to bring down the help of our Creator. *All best gifts and all perfect gifts are from above*.—"The name"—Yahweh—"itself contained a guarantee of help,—for it was the Covenant name of the God of Israel, and its use in supplication might be supposed to remind God of His Covenant". (Boylan).

#### Psalm 124.

Nothing can shake us—we shall be as immovable as Mount Sion, with God as a mountain-wall about us,—if we live faithfully in the Church and are good and right of heart. He will make an end of all opposing forces and give us peace.—Mary dwelt always steadfast, *not moved*, in God, and now she has power from God in our Jerusalem, the Church.

This psalm is illustrated by Psalms 45 and 47 and by St. Paul (I Cor.x.13): *And God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it*.—The rod is the sceptre of rule; the lot, the inheritance, is the land of Israel.—The triumph of evil is temporary.—The bonds are

twisted and knotted cords, and typify snares and treachery.

(3) SEXT.

The sixth hour, noon, is the hour at which Christ was crucified and began to endure the motionless agony of the cross. It is the middle of our day of activity. It is easy enough to begin our day, our work, our career with spring and courage and confidence: even with willing acceptance of some sacrifice. But as the day, or the day of life, wears on, the spirit often flags. The momentary break of Sext—about the time the Angelus rings, or near the midday meal?—has psalms that are strikingly suggestive in such a mood.

Psalm 125.

God can and will change our distress, whether it be the captivity of sin, or the trials of life, or the distress of the Church, into joy: He has done it often before now, magnificently. Our present labours will bear fruit in joy.—Mary understood the captivity of sin and felt the sorrows of life more than any creature. "Remember in the heavenly Sion our captivity which still endures. Loose by thy powerful help the chains of sin . . . . Deliver us from all the trials and distress of this earthly life, and dry the hot and bitter tears of us exiles." (Wolter).

This psalm is illustrated by Psalms 13 and 84.<sup>7</sup> It refers literally to the deliverance of the

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<sup>7</sup>. See the commentary on p. 105.

Jews from the Captivity; and prays for release from their present (metaphorical) distress and captivity.—The comparison *as a stream in the south* is explained by reference to the arid regions south of Palestine where the river-beds, parched in summer, spring into joyous life with the autumn rains.—The past tenses also refer to the future; P. Hugueny quotes St. Augustine: "The prophet's custom is, that speaking in the past he foretells the future . . . for all future things are in the eyes of God as if already done".

### Psalm 126.

Whatever our work may be, the condition of success is to have God with us. Otherwise our designs are utterly futile. But we need have no undue anxiety: with God and by His help our activity will be fruitful and we shall attain rest.—Mary is the outstanding example of faith and trust in cooperation with God; and the mother of innumerable children in the Church.

This psalm is illustrated by Proverbs x, 22: *The blessing of the Lord maketh man rich*, by St. Matthew vi, 25, *Be not solicitous*, etc., and by the Gospel of Martha and Mary.—Dr. Boylan translates the third and part of the fourth verse thus: "It is futile for you to rise before the dawn—even if you rise when ye have scarcely rested, ye who eat the bread of sorrow!" and explains: "The sense . . . is quite clear. It is perfectly useless to toil unless God's help is with us. Not merely is toil useless as such for success, since it cannot win it alone; it is also, at times,



altogether superfluous, for God gives the things for which men toil to His special friends, even when they are resting in sleep . . . We must seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and all these things will be added unto us."—*The inheritance of the Lord* is a lot or gift from Him.—The words of them that have been shaken are a simple mistranslation. The sense should be *the children of youth*; i.e. the sons of young fathers are like arrows in his strong hand, to defend him in his disputes and differences.—“The gate was the chief gathering place of Oriental towns. At the gate the law was administered and all important negotiations carried through”. (Boylan). P. Sertillanges gives a vivid description of such a gate in Chap. vi. of *Ce que Jésus voyait du haut de la Croix*.—The promise of children to the friend of God occurs also in the next psalm.

Psalm 127.

But we do fear the Lord i.e. fear to offend Him. We shall be blessed if we walk faithfully in His ways. Our work will be fruitful for ourselves, make us happy, and bear results for others. He will bless us and give us peace.—Mary walked most perfectly in God's ways; and is the fruitful Mother of children. “Look down on thy children, sweet mother of the living, born to thee under the cross of Christ the Lord” (Wolter).

This psalm, which continues the theme of the last, is illustrated by Psalms 33 and 142.—The vine is the symbol of fruitfulness, and the olive-shoots that spring up round the parent olive of



rich productivity.—God's *ways* are our proper individual vocation : He will make us happy in honest effort.—P. Hugueny discusses these verses at length and elicits the spiritual meaning of the promise of a large and flourishing family, frequent in the Old Testament as one of the natural blessings bestowed by God. He points out first that "those who are called to the honour of reciting the Office must remember that they do so in the name of all the faithful . . . among them are many fathers and mothers." But, in an applied sense, "there is the transmission of supernatural life . . . a spiritual parenthood attainable by all persons specially consecrated to the service of God, even by those who lead a purely contemplative life". Their children will be, at judgment and in eternity, "the support, the defence, the glory, and the happiness of those who have sacrificed their earthly joys to the incomparable happiness . . . of being the chosen instruments of bringing forth the children of God."—In them "Divine Wisdom becomes . . . a radiant centre of heat and light communicating life to a greater or less number of other souls."—This may be extended to all who influence others for good, and no one who serves God in *His ways* among his fellows is without such influence through prayer and action and contact. There is a wonderful promise in Isaias (lvi, 4-7) : *They that shall keep my Sabbaths and shall choose the things that please Me and shall hold fast my covenant : I will give to them in My house, and within My*

walls, a place, and a name better than sons and daughters. *I will give them an everlasting name . . . . I will bring them into My holy mount, and will make them joyful in My house of prayer . . . . for My house shall be called the house of prayer, for all nations.*

(4) NONE.

Christ died at the ninth hour. For us, the distress and heat of the day, its burdens and failures continue. We must turn patiently, trustfully, humbly, to God.

Psalm 128.

No matter what enmities are arrayed against us, nor how long, God can and will in one moment deliver us from contrarieties, distresses, sufferings. The sway and prosperity of the wicked will not last.—Mary suffered with Christ who suffered the persecution of sinners; and they have always tried to dishonour her; but her glory remains and her enemies are confounded.

This psalm is illustrated by Psalms 89, 102, 123, 36; and by the description of the harvest in the Book of Ruth. The allusion, the imagery, and the translation all make it difficult.—The literal allusion is to the long series of Israel's enemies: Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, Syrians, Assyrians, Babylonians.—Israel is compared to a field ploughed up, the oppression of her enemies to the furrows made by a team of oxen.—*Long have they worked their malice*, Dr. Boylan's translation, is clearer than *they have*

*lengthened their iniquity.*—To *cut the necks* is explained as meaning to cut the cords that bind the yoke to the necks of the oxen: when they can no longer plough.—In IV Kings, xix, 26, the inhabitants of destroyed cities *became like the grass of the field and the green herb on the tops of houses, which withered before it came to maturity.* Stray grass and corn seeds sprang up quickly on the flat Palestinian roofs, but withered in the heat.—It was the custom at harvest time for the passers-by to greet the harvesters with a blessing, as Booz did to his reapers. He said to them, *The Lord be with you*—our familiar *Dominus vobiscum.*

#### Psalm 129.

From the depths of our sinfulness, remorse, discouragement, loneliness, perplexity, fear, we cry out to God in hope. We trust Him and wait for Him *because* of His law, of which we sang the praises in Psalm 18 at Matins.—Mary looks up, not from depths of sin, but of humility: *He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaid.* But she knows the depth of our misery and prays for the redemption of the world.

This simple and familiar psalm, which we so often recite in the name of the dead, is illustrated by Psalms 39, 68, 102.

#### Psalm 130.

We must not strive fretfully after things that are beyond us; but humbly accept our condition, our limitations, our failings; give up agitation; trust in

God.—Mary, the handmaid of the Lord, is the model of humble-mindedness: at the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Purification, the feast of Cana, we see this in action.

This psalm is illustrated by Ecclesiasticus iii, 20-22: *The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God . . . Seek not the things that are too high for thee . . . but the things that God hath commanded thee, think on them always . . . . To exalt is to lift up, here in pride.*—The simplest of the explanations proposed for the comparison with the weaned child is that such a child is content simply to nestle in its mother's arms; "so does the soul of the Psalmist rest without longing or foolish ambition in the Lord". (Boylan).

#### (5) VESPERS.

The Vesper psalms interrupt the sequence of the Gradual Psalms. They are the same as those appointed in the Divine Office for feasts of Our Lady.

Vespers are the evening prayers, formerly called *lucernarium* (from *lucerna*, a lamp) because it was nightfall and the lamps were lit. The notes of this Hour are praise, peace, and thanksgiving. We may also think of the evening of life, as we are reminded in the words of the familiar Sunday Vesper hymn: *Ne mens gravata crimine Vitae sit exul munere*;<sup>8</sup> and we may recall the prayer of the two disciples at

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<sup>8</sup>. "Let not our souls heavy with sin lose the gift of life." (Dr. Adrian Fortescue's translation).

Emmaus : *Stay with us, Lord, for it is towards evening.*

Psalm 109.

This psalm sings the praise of Christ the Messiah, who is God from eternity (v.4), King and Judge (vv.1-3, 6, 7), and Priest (v.5). It is specially appropriate in Our Lady's Office thus to sing the incomparable glory of her Son, from whom her own lesser glory is derived; as is done in the Midnight Mass at Christmas, celebrating the birth of Him whom Mary gave to the world.

This most important Messianic psalm is illustrated by Psalm 2, and by the words of St. Paul (Heb. xiii, 8) : *Jesus Christ yesterday, to-day and the same for ever.* It is sung at Sunday Vespers in honour of Our Lord. It is quoted in the Gospels, e.g. St. Matthew xxii, 41-46, and in many passages of the Acts and Epistles. A commentator<sup>9</sup> points out the clear fulfilment of this prophetic psalm at our Lord's Ascension, when He took His place at the right hand of God, and received the due honour to His divinity which had been denied Him on earth. This raises a moving memory of His prayer after the Last Supper : *I have glorified thee on the earth : I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. And now glorify Thou me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had, before the world was, with Thee* (St. John, xvii, 4 & 5). It is rather difficult in detail.—

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<sup>9</sup> L. H. Molien, *La Prière de l'Église*, Vol. 1, Paris, Letouzey et Ané, 1924.



David calls God *the Lord*, and the Messiah *my Lord*.—In the East, a monarch was represented as treading on the prostrate bodies of his foes : Josue (x, 24) bids his victorious chiefs : *Go and set your feet on the necks of these kings*.—“Sion”, writes Dr. Boylan, “is the centre of Messianic rule, and thence the Messiah must exercise his sway among the hostile peoples round about. Sion was the seat of the ancient priest-king, Melchisedech, and it was the centre of the rule of David, the most important type of the Messiah”.—Melchisedech (Gen. xiv, 18) offered bread and wine in sacrifice, and is (Heb. vii) the type of the priesthood of the New Law. —V. 7 speaks of the complete triumph of the Messiah as King; *he shall fill ruins*, means *he will make destruction complete*.—V. 8 is very obscure but possibly a reference to the incidents of Gedeon (Judges vii, 5-6) and Samson (Judges, xv, 18-19). A very beautiful ancient explanation of the Latin text—even if it is not certain that the Latin text is faithful to the original—is that the Messiah was to drink of the torrent of suffering on the way of His life,—to be obedient (St. Paul, Philippians ii, 6-10) *unto death, even to the death of the cross*, wherefore He would lift up His head, and God would give Him a name which is above all names.—On these last verses P. Hugueny comments that though the Messiah is to be a king of peace rather than of war, we know from this psalm and from the Gospel that His wrath will be shown on the day of Judgment : “Terrible as are the figures of the prophet they



are but a faint symbol of the reality of the punishment threatening those who, up to the end, will refuse to accept the sweet yoke of Christ, the King."

Psalm 112.

This is the first of the Psalms called *Hallel*, songs of praise, which were used on the great festivals; and it was sung, with part of Psalm 113, before the Paschal Supper. We use it as an evening song of praise to God, great and glorious in Himself, good to men; His name is praiseworthy from daybreak to nightfall, from life's beginning to life's end.

The word *Hallel* is the first part of *Alleluia*—*praise God*.—These very words must have been used by Our Divine Lord just before He instituted the Blessed Eucharist; the rest of the *Hallel* was sung after the Supper and perhaps St. Matthew alludes to it when he says: *A hymn being said they went out unto Mount Olivet*.—We find the same theme and some of the same words in the Canticle of Anna (I Kings ii, 1-10), in splendid passages of Isaias (xl, ff.), and in the Magnificat.

Psalm 121.

As we repeat this psalm in the evening, we may reflect that we are now nearer to the house of the Lord where we shall be with His and our friends; for whom we pray. We pray for peace and all good things for the Church, God's house on earth where we are at home.

Psalm 126.

We repeat this psalm also, and remind ourselves

that we must still work with God, in the time that is left, even at the eleventh hour. But He will give us rest.

P. Hugueny comments that the friend of God "falls asleep each night in the joyous peace of trust that will not be frustrated". There is a similar note in Psalm 114; *Turn, O my soul, into thy rest : for the Lord hath been bountiful to Thee.*

#### Psalm 147.

Let us glory in Him who has protected us as in a walled city, who has kept us in His peace, who can do all things by a word; let us thank Him for His mercies, and sing His praise : privileged as we are, beyond others, to know His law and His judgments.

This psalm is illustrated by Psalms 60, 80 and 148 which we had at Lauds, and which ends also on the note of the special praise due from Israel, i.e. the Church. Literally, it is a song of thanksgiving for the rebuilding, in spite of all difficulties, of Jerusalem, and its prosperity after the return of the Jews from the Exile. The prophet Aggeus had urged on the rebuilding of the Temple : *Great shall be the glory of this last house more than of the first . . . and in this place I will give peace, saith the Lord of hosts* (ii, 10). With this we may compare the beautiful passage of Jeremias (xxix, 11, ff.) also promising the restoration of Jerusalem : *I think thoughts of peace, and not of affliction* etc., which we read as Introit in the Missal on the 23rd and following Sundays up to the last after Pentecost.—The *fat*

*of corn* is the *choicest wheat*; the word is also in Psalm 80, whence we get it in the Introit for Corpus Christi.—P. Hugueny suggests that the phenomena of severe cold, much less familiar in Palestine than with us, are chosen as a striking example of God's swift might. Snow covers the ground like white wool; the word *mist's* should be *hoar frost* which can look like a coating of fine ashes; the crystals in morsels may be explained as hail; and even great rivers cannot resist the cold but are frozen up. In the next verse the waters run once more. Chap. xliii of Ecclesiasticus, 17-25, celebrating the marvels of creation dwells on the same phenomena.

In Vespers of the Roman Rite, as at Lauds, there are three sets of antiphons for the five psalms. The second and third are the same as those of Lauds.

Four of the first set are taken from the Cantic of Canticles.<sup>10</sup> The first antiphon is interpreted of the Incarnation: the King is attracted by the sweet odour of Mary's immaculate virtue; the second suggests the Child with His Mother; the third, Mary's appearance of grief and affliction at the foot of the Cross, coupled with complete acceptance, which has merited the King's love; the fourth the change of the time of sorrow into joy at the Assumption; the fifth the beauty and happiness of Mary, rewarded and crowned in heaven.

Magnificat.

We may use Our Lady's cantic in the evening as a thanksgiving, particularly for special graces or

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<sup>10</sup>. The interpretation is that of Taunton.

for any good we may have done. It is woven together of two passages from I Kings (ii, 1-8, and i, 11), one from Genesis (xxx, 13), one from Micheas (vii, 20); and the rest from the Psalms. Our Lady used the words of Sacred Scripture, as did Our Lord Himself. "We know that Jewish girls," writes P. Hugueny, "who received any education, were first familiarised with the reading of the Psalms, and also with the canticles sung by the famous women of Israel, Mary the sister of Moses, Debhora, and Anna. To express the devout fervour which filled her heart, Mary must naturally have used expressions taken from prayers that were familiar to her." The Magnificat has three parts, God's mercies to Mary (vv.1-5), God's action in the world (vv.6-8) God's goodness to Israel (vv. 9-10). Mary hides her own great privilege in a more general thanksgiving, "hastens to withdraw from notice, to lose herself in the multitude of the lowly whose fervent gratitude she sings." (Hugueny). It is because she thus condescends to identify herself with us that we can make her words our own.

In the gospel for the Vigil of the Assumption Christ ascribes to His Mother a blessedness to which we can all aspire: to hear the word of God, and keep it, to fill our allotted part as she accepted her task of the Divine Maternity; as she went through it from her *ecce ancilla Domini*,<sup>11</sup> to the renunciation in the public life, then in Christ's passion, and in the separation of His death. In the gospel for the Feast, she is

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11. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

symbolised by the other Mary who *chose the best part*. Mary is blessed amongst women because she did these things perfectly. It is as if Christ wanted to encourage us by reminding us that Mary, for all her greatness, is one of us.

#### (6) COMPLINE

Compline, the night prayer, beginning on a note of contrition—*Convert us, O God, our Saviour*—*completes* vespers by thoughts appropriate to the end of the day,—and the end of life. These two ideas are linked together in the Blessing of Compline in the Divine Office: *The almighty and merciful Lord grant us a quiet night and a perfect end*; in the Responsory *Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit*; and in the *Nunc Dimittis* which we also recite.

There is what we might call a homing feel about the three Compline psalms of the Dominican Rite: something to rest in peacefully. God has promised to rest, as in His dwelling-place, in the sanctuary. We may think of our sanctuary the Church, of each Tabernacle, of the sanctuary of our hearts. It is in the community of the Church, the mystical body of Christ, and in the closer Dominican community, that we are most sensible of this rest and shelter, praying in union and fellowship with our brethren: *where there are two or three gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them*. It is in these circumstances that the Lord *hath commanded blessing and life for evermore*.—And we who are leaving off our prayer for the night's rest, ask others to carry it on for us.



Psalm 131.

David willed to make a dwelling for the Lord. Solomon's temple with the mysteriously sanctified Ark was but a figure of our churches. Our hearts are also in a true sense God's temples. Therefore, my heart before I sleep must be a place fit for the Lord to dwell in. His feet have stood in our churches, where we have adored, and continue to adore in spirit. May they, and all His priests, be worthy. May He fulfil His promise of blessings to His people among whom He dwells. May Christ be our horn of strength, our holiness.—Mary is in a special sense the Ark of the Covenant, and the Temple of God's rest.

This psalm is illustrated by Psalms 147, 71, and 88. It is difficult in detail.—The tradition is, that it was sung at the Dedication of Solomon's temple. The first part speaks of David's vow—not elsewhere mentioned, though his desire is—to build a temple; and of the bringing home of the Ark. In the second part the Psalmist prays for the fulfilment of God's promises to David,—“that the descendants of David who would sit on the Davidic throne would be worthy heirs of David's might—‘horns’ unto David, reproducing the greatness of David undimmed, and handing it on as the brightness of the never-extinguished lamp is perpetuated”. (Boylan).—We who owe the faith, whether we are born in it or recover it, to the heroic fidelity of our fathers, may plead their devotion in our behalf, as the Jews did David's.—The word *tabernacle*, a little shelter, diminutive of *taberna*, a hut or shed, is extended



in Scriptural language to mean a dwelling-place, as here in v.3; and is applied in v.5 to the Temple itself.—Vv. 6-8 are difficult: Dr. Boylan's explanation is simple. Ephrata is Bethlehem, David's birthplace called Bethlehem-Ephrata by the prophet Micheas who is quoted by St. Matthew ii, 6. *Fields of the wood* is an approximate translation of Cariathiarim, which means *Town of the Forest*. The Bethlehemites on hearing of it, i.e. David's oath, or the news of the oath, or (says P. Hugueny) the Ark itself, went—for the Hebrew does not necessarily imply *will go*—to Cariathiarim, revered the place where the Ark was, and besought God to take up His dwelling in Sion.—In v.10, the *saints are* the loyal people of God.—In v.11 the *anointed*, Latin *Christi*, is the reigning king Solomon.—In v.13, *testimonies* are God's commandments, as in Ps. 18.—The presence of God in His Temple will bring blessings to the widows and the poor; *salvation* “symbolises the internal blessings which the Dwelling-place of Yahweh shall bring to those of Sion.” (Boylan).—Each strong king would be a *horn unto David*, but *the* horn was to be the Messiah, mentioned also in the Benedictus.—The *lamp* is a symbol of lasting posterity and renown.—The *anointed* of v.18 is David.—The psalm ends in a Messianic prophecy: the promises in this and in Psalm 109 go far beyond a literal application to David and his successors.

Psalm 132.

This psalm is an expression of joy and fellowship;

we are praying together with all other Christians, and especially with those who are most closely bound to us,—at peace with others, in union of spirit. In these conditions God gives His gifts and graces most abundantly.—Mary's "love of dwelling together in unity was shown most gloriously at the foot of the cross. There were the sinless Mary, John the beloved disciple, Magdalen the penitent, the contrite dying thief, the converted pagan centurion—all together, the first divine family of the saved, an image of the Church; *simul in unum*, all together". (Wolter).

This psalm is illustrated by Psalm 44; and by the story of St. Mary Magdalen in St. Luke, vii.—Precious perfumed oil was used at the consecration of kings and high-priests; it was also used at social gatherings: *My head with oil thou didst not anoint*, says Our Lord. Oil was a symbol of gladness and prosperity. The oil of consecration, made with most precious spices, is described in Exodus, xxx.—According to P. Hugueny "the sweetness of fraternal gatherings" is compared to "that of the delicate and penetrating perfume" of the ointment. Dr. Boylan suggests that the gathering of brethren is a sort of collective consecration to God.—The mention of Hermon raises a geographical difficulty, which Dr. Boylan resolves by translating *Hermon-dew*, i.e. a proverbially abundant dew, symbolising the abundance of grace poured out in God's chosen sanctuary.

## Psalm 133.

There are those who pray while we sleep, religious who dwell in His house. Others also in all parts of the earth, and in heaven. May God bless our rest. —“In Mary’s mouth this psalm rings as if it were the Compline of her song of praise, the Magnificat” (Wolter):

This psalm refers directly to the night-watches in the temple; and the last verse is a blessing, given by one of the priests.

Nunc Dimittis.

The labour of the day is over, and at night, released from it, we rest. There is also the labour of life, and the rest of life eternal.—A medieval writer<sup>12</sup> says: “by this Compline is betokened your death and by your going to bed your burial. . . . Therefore this song is said at Compline rather than at other hours, that ye should every night be ready to desire death as Simeon did”. Christ the Light of life has shown Himself to us, to-day, —and to the world. This canticle expresses thanksgiving, happy acceptance, hopeful waiting, detachment. In life and in death, *Into Thy hands I commend my spirit.*<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>. Quoted by Taunton, p. 422, from an early fifteenth-century treatise called *The Mirror of Our Lady*. It contains a beautiful commentary on the Little Office, printed by Athelstan Riley as an appendix to his translation.

<sup>13</sup>. Sertillanges, *Recueillement*, p. 182.

### VIII. THE HYMNS

The Psalms and Canticles do not exhaust the interest, beauty, or stimulus of the Little Office.

The custom of singing hymns other than scriptural psalms and canticles arose very early in the Church. They were spontaneous and often quite popular in form, giving a note of actuality, "defining the sense of a festival or of an office."<sup>1</sup> We find such a hymn in each division of the Divine Office, where they are very varied, adapted to the Hour and to the day or feast. We do not know who wrote the three hymns to Our Lady used at Matins, Lauds, and the Little Hours of the Little Office, but they come down from the tenth, perhaps even from the sixth century,—being sometimes attributed to Venantius Fortunatus, the author of *Vexilla Regis*. The beautiful stanza *Maria mater gratiae* is inserted in all three in the Dominican Rite. There is some danger, especially in the English version, that the rhythmic words so often repeated may lull our attention to rest. To avoid this we may notice that the colour or note of the Hours is apparent also in the hymns. At Matins the theme—responding strictly to the Invitatory—is praise of Him who has condescended to become the *Virgin's Son*. He is (Stanza 1) Ruler of the universe, revered and proclaimed by earth, sea, and sky; (St.2) Master of the sun, moon and stars, unfailingly obeyed by the heavens;<sup>2</sup> (St.3) the Creator-Artist who holds the world in His hand.

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<sup>1</sup> Cabrol, *Prière Antique*, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> These two stanzas are closely followed in one of Chaucer's in the Second Nun's Tale.

This stanza makes a transition to Mary as, so to say, the second theme. She is (St.4) greatly blessed because she became the spouse of the Holy Ghost and Mother of the Desired of Nations. So (St.5) we beseech her help now and at the hour of our death; and (St.6) we conclude with the praise of the Holy Trinity, as we conclude all the hymns, psalms and canticles except the *Te Deum*, itself a praise of the Trinity : all our prayer is brought, as to its goal, to explicit praise of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

At Lauds the two themes are inverted. Mary (Stanza 1) is more glorious than the stars, because the Creator was a babe on her breast; because she is (St.2) the agent and first opening for our redemption through her Son; and (St.3) the shining portal of the great King, the Light of our life. Again (St.4) we beseech her protection and (St.5) glorify the Holy Trinity.

At Prime, Terce, Sext, and None, we start from our own needs, reminding Christ in words borrowed from the Christmas hymn at Matins and Vespers, that He has become one of us through His mother : this recalling of His human state is an ardent plea for understanding, mercy, pity. "For here in the race of Adam we have one . . . whom we call Christ, our brother, indeed, endowed with human nature, but also God-with-us, or Emmanuel, who by His grace and His merits, draws us all back to our divine Author and also recalls us to that heavenly beatitude from which we had miserably fallen away by original sin. Let us, therefore, turn to Him with a thankful heart; let us follow His precepts; let



us imitate His examples. For thus we shall become sharers of His divinity 'who deigned to become a partaker of our humanity.'"<sup>3</sup>

We reiterate our petition that Mary would avert present danger, and receive us at death; and we conclude as before, praising the Holy Trinity.

The *Ave Maris Stella*, which we say at Vespers, and at Compline in the Dominican Rite, is a pearl of that Latin hymnody of which Dr. Adrian Fortescue<sup>4</sup> wrote: "'there is not and there is never likely to be any religious poetry in the world worthy to be compared" to it. The singing rhythm; the simplicity of the imagery;<sup>5</sup> the appealing titles given to Mary, Mother of God, ever Virgin, Gate of Heaven, Star of the Sea,—"for as that is comfortable to ship-men", says a medieval writer,<sup>6</sup> "so is our Lady comfort to all that are in the bitterness of tribulation or temptation in the sea of this world"; the almost ejaculatory form; make it a perfect evening cry for all that we need. We ask for peace,—the number of petitions for peace and allusions to peace and the repeated prayer for deliverance from "present sadness" in the Little Office should give much point to its recital in these dark days<sup>7</sup>,—for deliverance from the bonds of sin

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<sup>3</sup>. Pius XI, Encyclical *Lux Veritatis*, 1931, on occasion of the 15th centenary of the Council of Ephesus, which vindicated Mary's title, Mother of God.

<sup>4</sup>. *Latin Hymns*, Letchworth, 1913, Preface.

<sup>5</sup>. This lovely use of imagery is found in the Collects also.

<sup>6</sup>. Quoted by Taunton, p. 397, from *The Mirror of Our Lady*.

<sup>7</sup>. Pope Urban II in 1095 enjoined the recital of the Little Office on the clergy and recommended it to the laity, to bring down our Lady's blessing on the Crusade. See p. 14.



and from our troubles, for light and all blessings; we ask for Mary's motherly care and her intercession with Christ, for gentleness, purity, a spotless life, a safe journey to Jesus and eternal life; and we end with the praise of the Trinity.

A Breviary Lesson for the feast of the Holy Name of Mary, drawn from St. Bernard, affords a moving commentary on the *Ave Maris Stella*, and indeed on the Little Office as a whole. "Whoever thou art who understandest that in the flux of this world thou art rather tossed about by storms and tempests than walking on firm earth: turn not away thy eyes from the brightness of this star, if thou wouldst not succumb to the storm. If the winds of temptation beat on thee, if thou makest shipwreck on the rocks of tribulation, look at the star, call on Mary. If thou art lashed by the waves of pride, of ambition, of detraction, of envy, look at the star, call on Mary. If anger, or avarice, or the allurements of the flesh, have shattered the bark of thy soul, look to Mary. If thou art troubled by the heinousness of thy crimes, overcome by the foulness of thy conscience, terrified by the thought of the judgment, and if thou beginnest to be drawn into the gulf of sadness, the abyss of despair, think of Mary.

"In dangers, in straits, in doubts, think of Mary. Have her always on thy lips, in thy heart; and that thou mayest obtain the help of her prayer, neglect not the example of her life. Following her, thou goest not astray, invoking her thou despairest not, thinking of her thou dost not err; if she hold thy hand, thou dost not fall; if she protect thee, thou dost not fear; if she lead thee, thou growest not

weary; if she favour thee, thou reachest thy journey's end. Thus thou dost experience in thyself how fittingly it is said: 'And the Virgin's name was Mary.'"

## IX. THE INVOCATIONS, EJACULATIONS, VERSICLES, RESPONSES, LESSONS.

These, what we might call minor, elements of the Little Office,—many of which occur also in the Divine Office,—are, some of them, so worn by familiarity that we hardly advert to their meaning.

We begin each hour by a greeting to Our Lady. It is in the Dominican Office a simple greeting, going back to a common medieval use, because the Rite is older than the Breviary of Pope St. Pius V, which definitely attached the recital of the *Holy Mary* to the *Hail Mary*. The Reformers, we are told, found fault with the short *Ave Maria* because it was not a prayer : thus narrowing prayer down to petition. A Dominican apologist replied that it was not petition, but praise. We may, therefore, find in this old form a sort of ceremonial and courtly act, an entrance salutation, a recognition of Our Lady's queenly dignity. "Take, O most sweet virgin Mary, this word which was sent thee by the Lord through the angel's ministry," prayed Blessed Jordan before the Ave.<sup>1</sup>

The Amens and Alleluias come to us from the Old Testament. *Amen* is a strong iteration : we do mean the words just said, or endorse them if heard, and desire that they may be realised. *Alleluia* is an ejaculation, *Praise be to God*, which we are apt to associate too exclusively with Easter bells. St. John heard it in heaven (Apoc. xix, 6) : *as it were the*

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<sup>1</sup>. *Lives of the Brethren*, London, B.O. & W., 1924, p. 103.

*voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunders saying Alleluia : for the Lord our God the Almighty hath reigned.*<sup>2</sup>

*Deo Gratias* comes down from the earliest Christian times, and ends nearly all the readings in the Mass and Office. It is a perpetual, recurring, thanksgiving, such as St. Paul tells us (Eph. v. 20) we ought to make : *Giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father.* What, indeed, we so often assert in the Preface at Mass to be *meet and just : always and in all places to give thanks.*

The *Gloria Patri* is a great act of faith in the Trinity, and was very probably<sup>3</sup> composed as an answer to the Arian and Macedonian heresies, which denied the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. Even if it dates, in its present form, from that time, the first part of it is far older.

The Versicles are cries of petition or praise, in simplest words expressive of any and every need; the Responses emphasize, or corroborate, the sense. How many times a day, and in what varied situations, do we thus call on God to put the right words on our lips, to *hasten* to our help; or beg Our Lady to intercede,—*intercede* is a word laden with meaning,—for us! We can but reiterate the same unsurpassable words of praise or appeal. St.

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<sup>2</sup>. Handel wonderfully expressed the spirit of these words in his *Hallelujah Chorus*.

<sup>3</sup>. Cabrol, *Priere Antique*, p. 267; Cabrol & Leclercq, *Art. Doxologies*.

Catherine of Siena loved the *Incline unto my aid* etc.

The *Vitae Fratrum*<sup>4</sup> contains the story of an apparition of Our Lady to a Dominican novice, with whom she recited her own Little Hours. He "began the Ave Maria, while she answered throughout. She seemed to recite her part so sweetly and gently that his heart was stirred wonderfully, more especially as she repeated the versicles after each chapter. As she said the versicles for None, *Elegit eam Deus* ("The Lord hath chosen her") the tones sounded with such heavenly melody in the novice's ears that his whole heart melted, and was rapt in God".—These prayers are venerable by their origin and associations; for instance *Felix namque es* of Matins is said to be from a sermon of St. Augustine. Others are almost as ancient, from the *Carmen Paschale* of Sedulius in the fifth century.

In the Responsories, i.e. versicles and responses arranged in series, certain words are repeated like a refrain, as if to let us linger over them, make them our very own, extract all their meaning: *Even Christ our Lord, Even Christ our Lord*; or *Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God*.

The responsorial form reminds us that the Church Offices are made to be chanted or recited in common: the familiar responsory after the Litany of the Saints is an example of this use. So are the words *Pray, father, a blessing*, which are also used in the Divine Office. Those who read the Latin will notice that the shortened, colloquial *domne* is used—the word

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<sup>4</sup> *Lives of the Brethren* just referred to.

eventually became *dom* and *don* and its sense is more exactly *sir*—while the full form *Domine* means *O Lord*. The Blessings invoke for us in the pithiest form Our Lady's intercession, help, and blessing.

The three Lessons, i.e. readings, from Latin *lectio*, have in the Dominican Rite the form of prayers to Our Lady and develop the wish expressed in the Blessing. They are remarkable in their imploring quality. They lift us above immediate needs, to the thought of the ultimate goal; that we may "reign with the elect of God unto all eternity", that by Christ's "loving kindness our sins may be cleansed away", that we may "be able to ascend to the seat of perpetual glory". We ask Mary to intercede for us, but God alone can grant our prayers; so all the Lessons, as in the Divine Office, end: "But thou, O Lord, have mercy on us".

The Lessons of the Roman Rite, in Advent, are from the first chapter of St. Luke. During the rest of the year they are from Chapter 24 of Ecclesiasticus. Extracts from that chapter, beginning at verse 14, divided over Lauds and the Day Hours as Little Chapters, are studied on pp. 84ff. Verses 11 to 13 have "a great affinity to the spirit which pervades the Psalms of the first Nocturn" (Taunton): that is, adoring submission to God. Rest can only be found in God. Mary chose that rest, chose to abide in His inheritance; and God made His dwelling in her, and appointed her to a place of dignity among His elect. Jacob, whose other name was Israel, is typical of the Church. Verse 19 adds the lovely shimmering olive,



so rich in usefulness to men, and the shady plane on the river-bank, to the trees mentioned in verses 17 and 18.

The prayer called Absolution in the Roman Rite is "not only a loosening from the faults we have committed while reciting the Office, but it is also a special prayer to dispose our soul to profit by the words of the Sacred Scripture which are about to be read to us".<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>. Quoted from a medieval writer by Taunton, p. 206.

## X. THE ANTIPHONS AND LITTLE CHAPTERS.

The *Antiphon*—or *anthem* which is the same word—as now used in the liturgy, is “a selection of words or verses prefixed to and following a psalm or psalms, to express in brief the mystery which the Church is contemplating in that part of her office.”<sup>1</sup> In the Little Office according to the Dominican Rite there are fewer antiphons than in the Roman: one only after each group of psalms, as well as after the Benedictus, the Magnificat,—these two vary with the season,—and the Nunc Dimittis. They are all praises or petitions to Our Lady, and bring us straight back to the leading idea, that we are reciting the Office in her honour.

Here, again, there is some danger of a sense of monotony; but it is dissipated when we look into the Little Chapters which, from Lauds to Compline, follow the Antiphons. The Little Chapter is simply a short reading—the longer readings for which there was time in the Night Office are called Lessons. In the Divine Office “the Little Chapter is regularly said after the Psalms and the Antiphons: it thus occupies the middle of the Office, of which it sums up the purpose; it rests the mind and the heart for a moment.”<sup>2</sup> That is also the character of our short readings, of which there are seven, taken in the

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1. Catholic Dictionary.

2. Cabrol & Leclercq, Art. *Capitula*.

Dominican Rite from Chapter 24 of Ecclesiasticus. There the inspired writer is singing, literally, the praises of Eternal Wisdom : Wisdom speaks of her origin, of her abode *in the inheritance of the Lord*, of her dignity, beauty, and fruits. These exquisitely poetic words have been put by the Church on the lips of Our Lady ; and we find the Epistles of her Masses often drawn from that chapter, and from the rather similar eighth chapter of Proverbs.

The Antiphons,<sup>3</sup> addressed to Our Lady, who as it were answers them in the Little Chapters, fit into the scheme of thought outlined for the different Hours.

At Lauds, the Antiphon refers to what was Mary's supreme distinction as a woman : absolute inviolacy, freedom from every earthly stain and tie, absolute undistracted single-mindedness in fulfilling God's purposes. The Little Chapter seems to say that therefore, from her very being and nature, spring forth blessings to the world : her type is the fragrant and luxuriant vine, flowering into rich and abundant fruit.

At Prime we ask her gracious permission to praise her, and strength to defend her cause against her enemies. The words are said to be St. Ephrem's. But they have a special interest for us. As we read in an Encyclical of Pope Benedict XV<sup>4</sup> they were often (*saepissime*) on St. Dominic's lips when he was exerting all his powers to defend the truths of

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<sup>3</sup>. In the Dominican Rite.

<sup>4</sup>. Encyclical *Fausto Appetente*, 1921, on the occasion of the 7th centenary of St. Dominic's death.

faith, especially Our Lady's divine maternity and virginity, against the blasphemies of the Albigenses. They fit admirably into our morning prayer. Her first praise is that she has existed in God's designs, in His scheme of redemption, from eternity, and will not cease to be : that she has ministered (and will minister) in His holy place. Part of that ministry, or service, is to help ours : to help us, by her example and intercession, to begin each day afresh the realisation of His divine plan for us and by us.

At Terce we rejoice with Mary in her power of destroying heresies. P. Clérissac suggests that she destroys heresies not only by her power, but that her very existence is an answer to them : heresies dissolve under the test of confrontation with the Divine Motherhood. These words go back probably to the fifth century, the time of the Nestorian heresy. All errors having been destroyed she is firmly established in Sion among the happy and secure people of God ; there she rests and great is her power. Hence it is that we may count on her help in the defence of truth,—and we may remember that the Apostles, strong in the power of the Holy Ghost, started out about the third hour boldly to preach the truth.

At Sext, we congratulate Mary on having had the double joy of virginity and motherhood. The Little Chapter seems to express a further joy, that of being the mother of a large spiritual family, of being surrounded by a thronging multitude of the people of God.

At None, as we have just called out to God *from*

*the depths*, we call on Mary to intercede for us, who has the power and influence of a queen over the world. The answer is exceedingly beautiful. In the heat and distress it suggests the most glorious and refreshing shade, shelter, and exhilaration. Mary is compared to the cedar of Lebanon, the king of trees, whose glory and beauty is described by the prophet Ezechiel (xxxix, 8, 7, 6): *no tree in the paradise of God, was like him in his beauty . . . . He was most beautiful for his greatness, and for the spreading of his branches . . . . And all the fowls of the air made their nests in his boughs . . . and the assembly of many nations dwelt under his shadow*. She is compared to the tall and stately cypress, rising to the sky above Sion; to the palm-tree, making a welcome shady oasis in the desert of Cades; to one of the beautiful flowering trees of fertile Jericho.

At Vespers we again appeal for Mary's intercession: the note of Vespers is calmer, less agitated. We are answered that her influence surrounds us like refreshing perfumes: cinnamon, and balm, and myrrh—reviving and invigorating, soothing, stimulating; the “salutary bitterness of myrrh” referred to in a sermon of Pope Pius XII about the feast of the Epiphany<sup>5</sup> suggests courage and persevering self-control. Myrrh is bitter to the taste but sweet to the smell. We are thus reminded of the fragrance of her virtues, and that thus she is the model of every life: every good life influencing

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5. 1940.

others. "Every soul that rises raises the world."<sup>6</sup>

At Compline the Antiphon, comparing Mary to the rose and the lily, tells her in a burst of joy and supplication that she is peerless amongst women. The Little Chapter is supremely full of grave teaching and of encouragement. Wisdom teaches us the beauty of the love of God, and why we should fear to offend Him; makes us recognise our state, the condition of our life and the way of salvation; and yet preserve a holy hope. Mary, the most perfect creature, teaches us all these things,—which she, the Seat of Wisdom, understood, pondering in her heart, better than anyone,—by her example; and procures them by her intercession. In the words of Proverbs viii put on her lips by the Church, she invites us to listen by a glorious promise: *Now therefore, ye children, hear me. Blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise. He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord.*

"We find in the Gospel Our Lady possessed of all the revealed principles of the Redemption", writes P. Clérissac . . . . "As to the guiding and directive side of wisdom, it is almost superfluous to point to the scenes of the Gospel in which Mary stands out with dominating dignity and grace."<sup>7</sup>

In the Roman Rite it is not quite so easy to link the Antiphons and Little Chapters; but these form a most interesting series in themselves.

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<sup>6</sup>. Madame Leseur.

<sup>7</sup>. Clérissac, *The Spirit of St. Dominic*, pp. 143, 144.



Throughout the year (I and III) at Lauds and Prime they are verses from the Cantic of Canticles; at the other Hours from Chapter 24 of Ecclesiasticus as in the Dominican Rite. The Advent series, except that for Sext which is from Chapter 1 of St. Luke, is taken from the prophet Isaias. No book of the Old Testament throws more light on the New,—or be it said in passing, on our Little Office,—as St. Augustine<sup>8</sup> tells us. When he had made up his mind to be baptised he wrote to ask St. Ambrose what part of the Scriptures it would be most proper for him to read, “And he appointed to me the Prophet Isaias, I believe because he, more evidently than any of the rest, foreshows the Gospel and the calling of the Gentiles”. He proclaims “Christ and His Church more amply than any other [prophet] in so much that some call him an evangelist rather than a prophet.”

The Antiphons to the Benedictus and Magnificat vary with the season. *Holy Mary, succour the miserable . . .* of Vespers, and the familiar Antiphon, of Eastern origin, to the Nunc Dimittis: *We fly to thy patronage . . .* are a most direct and intense expression of our needs. We may confidently entrust to Mary “all things that are ours . . . namely, our joys if we are gladdened; our troubles if we are in anguish; our hopes, if we are striving to reach at length to better things.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>. *Confessions*, Book IX; *City of God*, Book XVIII, Chap. 29.

<sup>9</sup>. Pius XI, *Lux Veritatis*.

## XI. THE PRAYERS AND COMMEMORATIONS

From Lauds to Compline each of the Hours ends in a prayer; but in course of time to the Prayers after Lauds and Vespers were added certain Commemorations, which have taken the place of Little Offices, devotional accretions to the Divine Office.

In the Proper of every Mass, whether it be of a Sunday or Feria (that is, a week-day) according to the season, of a mystery of our Lord's life, of our Lady, or of a saint, there are three appropriate and characteristic prayers,—Collect, Secret and Post-Communion. They sum up the whole spirit and the fruit of the Mass for that day or feast. Various explanations have been proposed for the word *Collect*, but the name is now given more particularly to the prayer read just after the *Gloria* or after the *Kyrie* if there is no *Gloria*. The Secret and Post-Communion are not essentially different in character, though they are less varied in substance. In the Divine Office the Collect of the day is usually said at Lauds, Terce, Sext, None, and Vespers; thus keeping the same spirit alive all day and linking the Office very closely with the Mass. In our Little Office the Prayers of the Hours are nearly all Collects or Post-Communions from the Masses of our Lady; the prayers of St. Dominic and for Peace are the Collects from the respective Masses.

These short prayers are of marvellous interest and

beauty. The finest of them are matchless for their brevity, and their exact and rhythmic wording,—qualities that defy translation,—but also for their depth of meaning. “They provide the most perfect prayer imaginable for summing up one’s meditations, and themselves afford material for many a meditation.”<sup>1</sup> They are composed—at least the older and more venerable ones—on a definite model, attributed to a great Pope and great Latinist of the fourth century, Damasus I. They are nearly all addressed to God the Father, through the Son, in the unity of the Holy Ghost; but two of the most familiar are exceptions, St. Thomas’s prayer to the Blessed Sacrament which we use at Benediction, and the commonest prayer for the dead, addressed to our Redeemer: *O God the Creator and Redeemer of all the faithful*, etc. God is invoked sometimes in a single word, sometimes with epithets of praise, such as *Lord God, almighty and eternal, almighty and merciful*; there is a direct and simple petition; and to urge and strengthen it there is a plea put forward as regards God, or a purpose as regards ourselves. It is enlightening thus to analyse collects that we constantly use, such as the prayer “before the Acts”, the prayer after the Rosary, the prayer of the Holy Ghost. Indeed our present study would be abundantly worth while if it had only this one result, to rivet our attention on the deep content of these Mass prayers. The great poet Claudel wrote a whole play of surpassing beauty on the theme of the

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1. C. C. Martindale, S.J., *The Mind of the Missal*, London, Sheed and Ward, 1929, p. 18.

Annunciation prayer : *Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts etc.*

We may take two examples from our Little Office. In the prayer we say so often after Lauds, Terce, Vespers, and the Salve, there is the *invocation*, "We beseech Thee, O Lord God," the short *plea*, because we are "Thy servants", the *petition*, which covers all our needs here and hereafter, to "enjoy health of soul and body" and through Mary's intercession to "be delivered from present sadness and enjoy eternal gladness". The prayer for peace is one of the most perfect. We *call* on God, on the *plea* that from Him alone come "holy desires, right counsels, and just works," to *give us* the fruit of these things, His peace in our hearts and in our times. Could any thought more effectually transcend our present troubles? Is it possible to imagine anything more like a foretaste of heaven?

The Commemorations also, both those that belong to the Little Office and those that we are recommended to make, have the effect of lifting up our thoughts and widening our outlook. We think of and pray to St. Dominic, all Dominican saints in general and in particular, all the saints of God. Cardinal Schuster<sup>2</sup> points out that the festivals of the saints adorn the Divine Office and "give it greater variety and grace; opening out within it from time to time a little parenthesis, as it were, in order to illustrate practically . . . how the life and mystery of Christ can be realized and lived again by the faithful." Not only do the saints illustrate

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<sup>2</sup>. *The Sacramentary*, Vol. III, p. 247.

holy living; they help us in virtue of the Communion of Saints to practise it. They "not only adorn the world by their word and work, but help to firmness and unity of mind those who invoke their aid; *quorum verbo et opere mundus decoratur eorumque munere mens consolidatur.*"<sup>3</sup>

In the Roman Rite there is a single Commemoration, that of All Saints. But we have seen that Commemorations replace or recall various Little Offices that were once recited. "We can find in the Commemoration of All Saints and its accompanying prayers traces of all the other little Offices in general use. First there is the Antiphon with Versicle and Response; then the prayer which recalls the Little Office of the Apostles. This is followed by a long prayer made up of many ideas blended into one: (1) That of All Saints corresponding to the Antiphon; (2) then the prayer for Peace; (3) then the prayer for the Dead; (4) then the general prayer to the Blessed Trinity. Between the prayer for Peace and that for the Dead are inserted two other petitions, the idea of the first seemingly taken from the two prayers at Prime in the Divine Office, and the other a prayer for benefactors."<sup>4</sup>

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3. "By whose word and work the world is adorned, and by their service the soul is fortified". Words from the Lauds Antiphon of all Dominican saints, quoted in the Preface to the *Manual of the Third Order of St. Dominic*, St. Saviour's, Dublin, 1934.

4. Taunton, pp. 306 & 307.



## XII. CONCLUSION

When one has to repeat the same formulas,—psalms, hymns, prayers,—every day, there is a danger of what we call routine. The word has acquired a rather repellent sense, though in reality it only means regularity in following a road. What if the regularity could be good and fruitful? It is clear now that these forms of prayer can be enriched by knowledge about them. We need not be like people traversing each day the same road, bordered by walls and closed gates, when we have only to open the gates and look in to the pleasures beyond.

Some formulas yield up their secrets only after much use and thoughtful repetition. They are the summing-up, or rather the quintessence, of wide and far-reaching truths and experiences. "We can use them to express whatever we would": our fundamental beliefs and needs, always the same, and our ever-changing moods and ideas which have to them something of the relation of variations to a melody. For example, the joyous Psalm 99 of Lauds may become a deliberate act of faith and trust on a day of trouble. Besides, the words of the Office take on a fresh colour according to the mystery of the day or season.

The words of the Liturgy are an education. Like all education this is a slow process. Like all education, it depends much on our cooperation. As in all education the lesson has to be repeated and practised: the repetition which sometimes bores us



may be an excellent method of familiarising our slow and dull minds with truths which, with patience, we at length take in. Cardinal Schuster<sup>1</sup> points out a reason for liturgical repetition: "that the faithful may not simply glance at the mysteries, but that by continuous acts of piety and practices of devotion in keeping with the spirit which the mystery aims at arousing, repeated for days and weeks, the soul may assimilate them and be transformed in them . . ." In the *Te Deum* we say: *Day by day* we magnify Thee.—Vouchsafe, O Lord, *this day* to keep us without sin.

"If you throw yourself wholeheartedly into liturgical prayer, it cannot fail to take possession of you, body and soul. It will colour your thoughts with the varied hues of supernatural light, imbue your wills and your hearts with strength and love, and even stir your sensible faculties and your whole being."—"While disengaging us from petty anxieties it will act on us unconsciously and mould us into greatness . . . it transcends all personal considerations . . . in the Liturgy we merge our individuality into the supernatural life of the Church, and become one with her in her invisible action in the world."<sup>2</sup>

We go back to the beginning, to the original Greek meaning of the word *liturgy*: a public service discharged by richer citizens at their own expense. We are the richer, more privileged, citizens in the

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<sup>1</sup>. Vol. III, p. 246.

<sup>2</sup>. Clérissac, *The Spirit of St. Dominic*, pp. 67 and 68.

City of God. Shall we not in the small measure of our power discharge this public service willingly, joyously, appreciatively?

## APPENDIX

### MATINS AND PRIME OF THE ROMAN RITE.

#### (1) MATINS

The Psalms of the First Nocturn, recited on Sundays, Mondays and Thursdays, are as in the Dominican Rite, except for the addition of an antiphon to each psalm.

The Second Nocturn sings (Psalm 44) of the adorable beauty, splendour, and power of Christ and of His Mother; of God's presence and power to defend us (Psalm 45); and of the glory of His City (Psalm 86).

#### Psalm 44.

Our hearts swell with the praise of Christ, the Messiah, Our King; and of her whom He has chosen above all others to be His Bride, His Queen, to stand at His right hand and bring others to Him, to be the Mother of generations who to the end of time will uphold and spread His name.

Verse 5, adapted from praise of the glory of Our Lord to that which is reflected on Our Lady, is used as the antiphon.

This psalm, literally a wedding-song in honour of a king and his bride, is at a first reading one of the most difficult, but it is also one of the most poetic and richest in light and inspiration. It goes beyond anything that could be true of any Jewish king, and is a Messianic prophecy.—It falls into four parts. In verses 1 and 2, the psalmist tells us of his mood and his subject; in

verses 3-10 he sings of the beauty, the martial splendour, the triumph, the just and prosperous and everlasting reign, the unparalleled joy and glory of the King; in verses 11-17 he describes the Bride and her companions; and prophesies in verses 18-20 undying posterity to Bridegroom and Bride.—The imagery in verses 11-17 is applicable not only to Our Lady, but to the Church, also the Bride of Christ, and in a sense to every soul.—Christ Himself used the simile of the Bridegroom: *Can the children of the marriage fast, as long as the Bridegroom is with them?* (Mark ii, 19), and St. John the Baptist used it of Him: *He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom's voice* (John iii, 29); as does also St. Paul (Eph. v, 25).—The psalm is used in the Offices of Virgins and Holy Women.—*Hath uttered*, and continues to pour forth.—*My works are my literary work*, this poem in particular.—Verse 3, adapted to Our Lady, is used as a versicle at Matins.—*Therefore hath God blessed thee*, is explained to mean *for this*: the *grace* is the result of God's blessing.—The allusion to the triumph of the Messiah over His enemies in the day of His wrath is also found in Psalm 109.—Verse 6 is easier to understand in Dr. Boylan's translation: "Thy sharp arrows pierce home—while peoples fall before thee—to the heart of the King's foes".—In addressing the King as *God* in verse 7, the psalmist is

obviously writing of the Messiah.—The *oil of gladness* is the precious oil alluded to in Psalm 132, used at festive gatherings and at the consecration of priests and kings. It symbolises the glory of Christ risen and ascended into heaven, which we found in Psalm 109.—With the other perfumes it also signifies His unutterable and communicative joy (Hugueny).—The *ivory palaces* are “probably the apartments or houses set apart for the queen and her attendants.” (Boylan).—Verse 12 introduces a direct address to the Bride, a call hearkened to with supreme readiness and submission by Our Lady, the model of all who hear it.—The Bride does not approach the King alone; all who want His favour approach Him through her, “because they know that it is the road to His heart” (Hugueny).—The *golden borders* or *fringes of gold* refer to the gold embroidered edges of her garments; *within* may mean *within the royal apartments*.—The Bride is followed by her train of maidens: “the second mention of the bride’s ornaments symbolizes the fresh brilliancy and incomparable worth given by intimacy with Christ to the virtues of a soul really devoted to Him,—virtues that the lives of the saints in the Church show us under the most varied aspects. These virtues exercise such an attraction, that a soul that has reached this degree of holiness does not appear alone before the Divine King. She always draws after her a certain number of other souls . . .” (Hugueny).—The *sons* are interpreted to mean the Apostles

—verses 18 and 19 are used in the Office of Apostles—and their successors, who will carry the name of Christ to all the earth, and perpetuate it for ever.

Psalm 45.

In the worst convulsions of nature and of our own souls we are not afraid; for we live in the city of God, where we have the ever-springing well of His Grace, *living water springing up into life everlasting*. The mighty God Himself dwells in the midst of us. He brings our enemies to naught and gives us peace.

The Antiphon, a slight variant of verse 5, suggests that God reveals Himself to Our Lady, dwells in her, and protects her, in a special way.

This psalm expresses the same confidence as Psalms 26, 124, and many others. Literally, it is explained as alluding to the miraculous saving of Jerusalem from the Assyrians, when the angel of the Lord slew 185,000 of them in the night, and the king Sennacherib departed next morning, thus ending the war in Palestine (Isaias, xxxvi, xxxvii).—*The stream of the river* is, literally, the spring that fed the waters of Siloe (Isaias viii, 6); the *tabernacle* is the Temple.—*In the morning early* : help will come swiftly.

Psalm 86.

Sion of old was glorious and blessed above other cities in being the spiritual mother of all true adorers of God. What is said of her is still more profoundly true of the Church. And glorious and blessed is Our Lady, the chosen dwelling-place of the



Most High, the well-spring of the Life given to all nations, the mother of rejoicing children.

The Antiphon applies the last verse especially to Mary—the Cause of our Joy—and reminds us of her spiritual motherhood.

This psalm is illustrated by Psalm 45 which we have just read, and by Psalms 46 and 47. Not only is God *in the midst* of His city (Psalm 45); He is *the king of all the earth* (Psalm 46), and *with the joy of the whole earth is Mount Sion founded* (Psalm 47).—It is lit up also by Chapters liv and lxvi, but above all by Chapter lx of Isaias, from which the exultant epistle of the Epiphany is taken.—Sion here is a prophetic figure of the universal Church. When the political power of Jerusalem had fallen, many of its people had scattered amongst heathen nations and were making proselytes (i.e. converts). They regarded Sion as the “great centre of the pure worship of God, the spiritual home of all true believers” (Boylan).—The *holy mountains* are the hills on which Jerusalem stood; *holy* means *set apart, consecrated*.—The expression *gates of Sion* is an equivalent of *Sion*: like the expression *gates of Hell* (Matt. xvi, 18).—There is a sudden change of speaker; God himself speaks in verses 3 and 4.—Five stranger nations are mentioned as typical of those that have heard of the true God: Egypt (Rahab is a poetical name), Babylon; the Philistines (indicated also in Psalm 55 and elsewhere as *of another race*), the people of Tyre, and the Ethiopians.—They *were*

*there, were in her* (Latin *fuere*) is explained as meaning that they have the birthright of children of Sion.—The metaphor of the *writings* of the Lord is frequent. In Psalm 138 : *In Thy book all shall be written*; the familiar *book of life* in the Apocalypse (xx, 12) in which men's deeds are recorded; and our Lord's own words : *Rejoice in this, that your names are written in heaven* (Luke x, 20).

The Third Nocturn recited on Wednesdays and Saturdays consists of three closely connected psalms of praise and adoration. God is the King (Psalm 95) who will judge the earth; whose kingdom (Psalm 96) is the kingdom of truth and righteousness; who is (Psalm 97) the salvation of all peoples.

#### Psalm 95.

We call on one another to sing a new song,—realising anew the joy of God's revelation through Christ to the whole world, and His greatness, power, beauty, and holiness; we adore Him; and we call on all nature to rejoice at His coming and at the justice of His judgment.

The antiphon (used at Terce in the Dominican Rite) reminds us of Mary's part in establishing and continuously promoting the reign of truth.

This psalm is illustrated by Psalms 45, 46 and 32; and by Isaias, chapters xlv and xl. It is used at the midnight Mass of Christmas. It is (verses 1-9) a trumpet call to the nations and (verses 10-13) a hymn to the glorious reign of the Messias.—It is called a *new* song either

because the psalmist was moved afresh to exultation or because it was composed for a special occasion.—*From day to day* as in Psalm 18 and the *Te Deum*.—In verse 9 *be moved* is the equivalent of *tremble in awe*; in verse 10, *it shall not be moved* means that it is firm on its foundations; in verse 11, of the sea, *to be moved* means *to surge in exultation*.

Psalm 96.

The kingdom of Christ has been set up with mighty manifestations of His power and majesty. All nations, the angels, the Church and all its members, adore Him. We must therefore hate evil, trust God, live and rejoice in His Light.

The antiphon (used at Prime in the Dominican Rite) asks Our Lady graciously to accept our praise, and to strengthen us against her enemies. Her enemies are those of the kingdom of Christ. Her praises are His.

This psalm is illustrated by Psalm 46—which is used in the Mass at Easter, by Psalm 76, and especially by Psalm 17.—Verses 1-6 describe the coming of the Lord in power and majesty: P. Hugueny refers this specially to the Last Judgment. Verses 7-11 hail the victory of truth and justice.—“The ‘Isles’ meant originally the coast-lands of the Mediterranean; but in the second half of Isaias the word is frequently used to designate the outlying heathen lands” (Boylan).—Clouds and darkness, fire, lightning, mountains melting, these symbols or accompaniments of God’s coming in power are usual in the

Old Testament from Mt. Sinai onwards.—The *saints*, as so often, are God's loyal servants.—*Light is risen* reminds us again of the Epiphany.

Psalm 97.

Again we extol and adore the triumphant Christ. He is the Saviour of all peoples, and has fulfilled His promises to Israel. Men and all nature rejoice, and will rejoice in the manifestation of His glory at His second coming.

The Antiphon (used at Lauds in the Dominican Rite) reminds us that Christ came to us through His Virgin Mother, who is therefore our intercessor and mediatrix.

This psalm repeats the theme of Psalms 95 and 96, and again is illustrated by Isaias xlii-xliv. It is still more exultant than the others and is used in the third Mass of Christmas Day.—It falls into two parts (verses 1-6 and 7-10) and "on Christian lips can only be a song of thanksgiving for the divine wonder of the Incarnation and a song of hope in the full manifestation of the glory of Jesus and His faithful followers on the day of the Last Judgment" (Hugueny).—*Wrought salvation*, that is, delivered Him from His enemies.—Musical instruments such as those in this psalm are frequently mentioned in the Old Testament, for instance in Psalm 150.—*Let the sea be moved*, as in Psalm 96.—The *compass of the earth* is the whole world.—Clapping of hands and blowing of trumpets were part of the ceremonial of acclaiming a king, as in the case of the little Joas,

when the wicked usurping queen Athalia fell (IV Kings xi, 12, 14). We read, from Psalm 46, in the Mass of the Ascension : *God is ascended with jubilee, and the Lord with the sound of trumpet.*

(2) PRIME.

Psalm 53.

This psalm begins the day, as often in the Divine Office, with a pathetic cry for help against all the enemies of our soul ; but an equally strong assertion of our trust in God, and a promise of loving thanksgiving for our deliverance.

This psalm is illustrated by Psalm 85.—Literally, it is the cry of David, threatened by treacherous enemies who would betray him to Saul.—Our help is *in the name* of the Lord, as in Psalm 123.—The word translated *strangers* may also mean *enemies*, or the proud and violent who are strangers to God's law.—*I will freely sacrifice* includes all daily sufferings and offerings.

Psalm 84.

God has mercifully wrought redemption for His people. We pray that it may be fully applied to ourselves ; that we may be converted in heart and delivered from our sins and miseries ; so that Christ's kingdom of mercy, truth, justice, and peace may be realised in us.—*Thy kingdom come.*

This psalm is illustrated by Psalms 125, 80, 71, and by many chapters of Isaias, especially xl, xlv, lviii.—Verses 6 and 7 are used in the responsory at the beginning of every Mass,



after the Confiteor and the Absolution ; and verse 4 every day at Compline.—Literally, the captivity referred to is that of Babylon ; but the returned Israelites were not happy : “ their homecoming had been full of disappointment. Instead of joy and peace, unsettlement and sadness prevailed throughout the land, and men were wondering why the Lord had brought them back from Babylon only to the disillusionment of Juda ” (Boylan). They were praying and looking for deliverance through the Messias.—No psalm is more directly capable of being applied to our state in the Church Militant.—*Turned away* means *reversed*, that is, the exiles were brought back.—The *saints* are the loyal servants of God, as usual.—The imagery of the last verses is often used to describe the longed-for reign of the Messias ; as in Psalm 71 which contains many things familiar to us through the Advent Masses.—Truth *sprung out of the earth*, may suggest Christ’s birth of a Mother, on whom God looked down with pleasure.—It also suggests the good deeds of men.

#### Psalm 116.

We thank God and call on all nations to thank Him for the mercies recorded and foretold in Psalm 84.

This psalm was part of the Hallel. It is wonderfully illustrated by its use in Chapter xv of the Epistle to the Romans.—It is often used as a psalm of thanksgiving, for instance, in the



Tertiary Ritual for reception and profession.—  
God's mercies to us Christians far surpass those granted to the Jews, so that "we should recite this psalm with all our heart . . . especially after Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament which it habitually concludes. It is all the more appropriate there because just then we are adoring the memorial of all God's mercies to us, and because it recalls the Hallel, sung by Our Lord after the institution of the Holy Eucharist" (Hugueny).

## TRANSLATIONS OF SOME BREVIARY HYMNS.

At Prime :--

At rising of the star of day,  
Let us to God all humbly pray  
That He preserve us till the night  
From actions harmful in His sight.

May He our wayward tongues restrain  
Lest noisy strife break forth amain ;  
May He control our wandering eyes  
Lest they drink in earth's vanities.

May He keep pure the inmost heart,  
From senseless folly far apart ;  
The pride of rebel body tame ;  
From sin through abstinence reclaim.

That when at last the day is done,  
And night begins its course to run,  
Rising above all worldliness  
Our hymns His glorious name may bless.

Yea, to the Father and the one  
Only-Begotten holy Son,  
And to the Spirit glory be,  
Now and to all eternity.

At Terce :—

Now come, O Holy Spirit, one  
With God the Father and the Son ;  
Come quickly down and deign to fill  
With Thine own Self our thought and will.

Let tongue, lips, mind, sense, strength,  
attest

The presence of our holy Guest ;  
Let love flame ever high and higher,  
Kindling around its burning fire.

O loving Father, hear us pray,  
With Thy co-equal Son alway,  
And with the Spirit ; One in Three  
Reigning to all eternity.

At Sext :—

O God of truth, O mighty Lord,  
Controlling all things by Thy word,  
To morn Thou giv'st soft beams of light,  
To midday, shafts all fiery bright.

Sway our souls too ; extinguish broils,  
Calm spirits caught in passion's toils,  
Give bodies from their ills release,  
Give hearts Thy true and blessed peace.

O loving Father, hear us pray,  
With Thy co-equal Son alway,  
And with the Spirit ; One in Three  
Reigning to all eternity.

At None :—

God, who, of fleeting things the stay,  
Changeless Thyself abid'st alway,  
Who givest us the hours of light  
Each after each in ceaseless flight,

Still let Thy light at ev'ning shine  
Lest that our soul's true life decline;  
Bring us to holy death, O Lord,  
And endless glory, its reward.

O loving Father, hear us pray,  
With Thy co-equal Son alway,  
And with the Spirit; One in Three  
Reigning to all eternity.

At Compline :—

Ere the last gleam of daylight dies,  
Creator of the earth and skies,  
Thy wonted clemency we pray,  
Be 'Thou Thyself our guard and stay.

Afar let troublous dreams take flight,  
And all the phantoms of the night.  
Our enemy do Thou restrain,  
Lest deadly sin our bodies stain.

Almighty Father, hear us pray  
Through Jesus Christ Thy Son alway,  
Who with the Spirit and with Thee  
Reigns unto all eternity.

At Compline in Lent (Dominican Rite) :—

O Christ, who art the Day, the Light,  
Lifting the pall of earthly night,  
Thee Light of Light by faith we know,  
Who dost the light of heav'n foreshow.

O holy Lord, to Thee we pray,  
Defend us at this close of day;  
Give us in Thee our rest to find,  
And quiet night and tranquil mind;

Lest heavy sleep should bear us down,  
Lest by our foe we be o'erthrown,  
Lest flesh, consenting to his wiles,  
Do aught that in Thy sight defiles.

While weary eyes are bound in sleep,  
With Thee our hearts would vigil keep.  
Thy right hand shield us from above!  
Thou knowest Thy poor servants' love.

Look to our danger, look and aid  
Thy flock, by lurking foes dismayed.  
Rule us and lead, for whom Thy blood  
Was poured in the redeeming flood.

Remember us, O Lord, who lie  
In body's heavy lethargy.  
Our souls' Defender, strong to ward,  
Be with us in the night, O Lord.

Almighty Father, hear us pray  
Through Jesus Christ Thy Son away,  
Who with the Spirit and with Thee  
Reigns unto all eternity.

At Compline during Eastertide (Dominican Rite) :

O Jesus, Ransom of our souls,  
Our love, our heart's desire always,  
God and Creator, Lord of all,  
Man in the fulness of the days,—

What pity swayed Thee when Thou cam'st  
To bear our sins upon the cross,  
Enduring pangs of cruel death  
To save us from eternal loss?

To prison depths Thou didst descend  
To set Thy holy captives free.  
Triumphant now at God's right hand  
Thou sittest to eternity.

May the same loving clemency  
Move Thee to vanquish all our ills,  
To spare, to hear, to show at last  
That Face that all earth's longing stills.

In holy time of Easter joy,  
Author of all, we pray to Thee  
To keep Thy suppliant people aye  
From ev'ry deadly danger free.

All glory be to Thee, O Lord,  
Rising triumphant from the dead,  
To Father and to Paraclete,  
Until and after time is sped.



The last two stanzas of this hymn vary, as follows :—

For the Ascension :—

Be Thou our only joy on earth  
Who art our great reward in store.  
Grant us when life is done to find  
In Thee our glory evermore.

All glory be to Thee, O Lord,  
Who didst above the stars ascend,  
To Father and to Paraclete,  
Throughout the ages without end.

For Pentecost :—

But now Thou hast poured down Thy grace  
Into hearts consecrate to Thee.  
Forgive us too our sins and grant  
Peace in our times perpetually.

To Father, Son, and Paraclete  
Our humble voice its praise uplifts ;  
May the same blessed Son send down  
On us His Holy Spirit's gifts.

## COMMEMORATIONS OF THE PASSION FROM A MEDIEVAL PRYMER.<sup>1</sup>

---

At Lauds :—

The Wisdom of the Father,  
The Truth of the High King,  
God and Man was taken  
At the daybreaking.<sup>2</sup>

Of His known disciples  
Soon was He forsake;  
Sold and put to pain,  
Mankind safe to make.

℣. We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee,  
℞. Because by Thy death Thou hast redeemed the  
world.

### *Prayer.*

Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son of heaven, set Thy passion, Thy cross and Thy death between Thy judgment and our souls, now and in the hour of our death; and vouchsafe to give to living men mercy and grace in this life here; and to them that are dead forgiveness and rest; to the Church and to the State<sup>3</sup> peace and concord; and to us sinful men, life and glory without end; Thou that livest and reignest God, for ever and ever. Amen.

---

<sup>1</sup>. Slightly modernised, in order to preserve the rhythm, from Littlehales' *Prymer or Lay Folk's Prayer Book*.

<sup>2</sup>. "In the morwening".

<sup>3</sup>. "Rewme," realm.

At Prime :—

Jesus at hour of prime  
Was led before Pilate,  
With lying<sup>1</sup> witnessing  
Gravely<sup>2</sup> accused for hate;  
Buffeted; His hands were bound;  
They spat upon His face;  
Thus did they see defiled<sup>3</sup>  
Our Lord, the King of grace.  
(Versicle and Prayer as at Lauds).

At Terce :—

At morning<sup>4</sup> the false Jews  
Cried out with their voice,  
Deliver us Barabbas,  
Put this man<sup>5</sup> on the cross.  
A piercing crown of thorns  
They put upon His head,  
And laid on Him<sup>6</sup> His cross  
On which He should hang dead.<sup>7</sup>

At Sext :—

At midday our Lord Jesus  
Was nailed upon the rood;  
Between two thieves He hung,  
His body ran with blood.  
He thirsted with the pain,<sup>8</sup>  
For drink they gave Him gall.  
All this pain He suffered  
From death to buy us all.

---

1. "False." 2. "Michel." 3. "Biseien foule."

4. "At undren", the third hour. 5. "And do this"

6. "Dide Him bere" 7. "There He schulde be deed".

8. "Hym thirstide for peyne".

At None :—

At none died Our Lord Jesus  
 Who had of might the most ;  
 Cried 'Eli' to His Father  
 And so gave up the ghost.  
 A spear into His side  
 Was smitten<sup>1</sup> by a knight ;  
 And then the earth did quake,  
 The sun withdrew his light.

At Vespers :—

From cross, Christ taken down  
 At vesper-time we find ;  
 The power of resurrection  
 Lay hidden in God's mind.  
 The Healer of our life  
 Thereafter conquered death.  
 But now the crown of glory  
 Was cast to earth beneath.<sup>2</sup>

At Compline :—

At the hour of compline  
 They laid Him in His grave—  
 The noble body of Jesus  
 That mankind is to save.<sup>3</sup>  
 With spices He was buried  
 Holy Writ to fulfil.  
 Think we sadly<sup>4</sup> on His death  
 That shall save us from hell.

1. "Thrillid," thirled, thrust.

2. This stanza occurs in two completely different forms, of which the simpler is freely rendered above.

3. "That mankynde schal save".

4. "Sadly," seriously, sorrowfully.

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OUT OF THE DEPTHS  
NOTES ON THE OFFICE OF THE DEAD.

by

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## PREFACE

It is characteristic of the genius of Saint Paul that he is able, at any moment, to suggest the integral truth of Christianity. He enjoys that priceless gift, a living inspiration, which unifies the energies of his mind in concentrated vision. Rays of that vision, for which the very meaning of life is Christ,<sup>1</sup> light up his pages. A single phrase, taken at random, can flood his reader's mind with light.

One such text was chosen by Pope Pius X to be the motto of a liturgical revival in the Church. It tells of the purpose of God "to re-establish all things in Christ, that are in heaven and earth."<sup>2</sup> At a bound the mind is taken up into the heart of God in which the Apostle reads the secret of His purpose; from there it surveys the majestic climax of a final achievement, a summing up, in which all things, whether on earth or in heaven, are brought under the immediate Headship of Jesus Christ.

This Headship of our blessed Saviour is the constant theme of Saint Paul. He sees the Church, of which Jesus is Head, as a Body; and together they form "one mystic Person". Could we but

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1. "For to me, to live is Christ: and to die is gain".—*Philipp.*, i, 21.

2. *Eph.*, i, 10.

fully enter into this conception, where a living sense of solidarity between earth and purgatory and heaven awaits us, we should marvel at the plan of creative Love. We should then see that Jesus vivifies a vast mystic Body, of which we are members, and that an eternal dream of God is in process of realisation through the agency of His Spirit.

That dream is a humanity re-made in the "image and likeness" of God's Son.<sup>3</sup> In Him we were chosen "unto the praise of His glory"<sup>4</sup>, and that before the creation of the world, so that "we should be holy and unspotted in His sight, in charity".<sup>5</sup> Now "God is charity"<sup>6</sup> and it is contact with God, to Whom we have access in the Spirit of Christ, which alone can render men "holy and unspotted" in His eyes.

We have no adequate conception of the joy that fills the heart of God when He sees, radiating from this new humanity, the glory of His Son. Throughout the Church, which is one, He seeks it : in heaven, where in the abyss of joy the blessed know God "even as they are known"; in purgatory, where hunger for His sight, amidst purifying flames, is but a response to God's longing ; on earth, where men seek God because He has found them, having called them to fellowship with His Son, Jesus.

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3. "For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son".—Roms., viii, 29.

<sup>4</sup> Eph., i, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Eph., i, 4.

<sup>6</sup> John, iv, 16.



No more certain way exists of entering into this magnificent vision than the liturgy, which is the life of the Church. Of this liturgy you have a portion here, chosen with great artistry by the Church of the ages, and interpreted with real insight by Professor Mary Ryan. To share in this liturgy, opening one's soul to its movement, is to be lifted out of petty thoughts and cramping interests; to pray in charity for the suffering ones is to find a region of peace and light. "When thou shalt pour out thy soul to the hungry, and shalt satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise up in the darkness, and thy darkness shall be as noonday, and the Lord will give thee rest continually, and will fill thy soul with brightness".<sup>7</sup>

"Now no experience", writes the author, "searches us to the depths of our being like death". It is true. But death is no ultimate thing for the Christian liturgy: "For the life of Thy faithful, O Lord, is changed, not taken away: and the abode of this earthly sojourn being dissolved, an eternal dwelling is prepared in heaven."<sup>8</sup> Who, reading this, does not recall that final scene in which Jesus gave shape and form to the unknown land of immortality? Speaking to His disciples of the mansions of His Father, of which the present world is but one, He said: "And if I shall go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will take you to myself; that where I am, you also may be".<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Is., lviii, 10-12.

<sup>8</sup> Preface of Mass for the Dead.

<sup>9</sup> John, xiv, 3.

The manner of His going was death; the manner of His return was resurrection.

Christian immortality is no mere survival of the spirit: it has its prototype in the resurrection of Jesus Who is indeed "the Resurrection and the Life".<sup>10</sup> He at Whose creative Word the universe sprang into being, He Who is the unfailing Source of life, has promised not only a survival of the spirit and immortality, but a resurrection. Then death shall be no more. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes".<sup>11</sup> Bodies shall rise again to share in the ecstasy of spirit.

It is a privilege, for which I am deeply grateful, to be associated with the purpose of the following pages. If they are read, and pondered over, it will not be possible to hear in sorrow that triumphant hymn, of soaring notes, *Deducant Te Angeli*, without a sudden quickening of hope and joy whose only adequate utterance will be the challenge of Saint Paul:

"O death, where is thy victory?

O death, where is thy sting?"<sup>12</sup>

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Cork. October 22nd, 1942.*

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<sup>10</sup>. John, xi, 25.

<sup>11</sup>. Apoc., xxi, 4.

<sup>12</sup>. I Cor., xv, 55.

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## INTRODUCTORY

There is a method used in French literary study called *explication de texte*, the unfolding, that is, of all that is contained in, or may be drawn from, a given literary passage. Nothing can be more illuminating or productive of keen perception. Does it seem audacious to apply some such effort to the prayer of the Church? It is, after all, a sublime literature. Here is the witness of a poet<sup>1</sup> who, as a young man, recovered his faith and discovered the Liturgy at the same time :

“I spent all my Sundays at Notre-Dame, and went there during the week as often as possible. . . . There was the sacred drama unfolding itself before me with a magnificence that surpassed anything I could imagine. Ah, this was not the poor language of pious books. It was the deepest and highest poetry, those were the most august actions that had ever been entrusted to human beings. I never tired of watching the Mass, and every movement of the priest was deeply engraved on my mind and heart. The reading of the Office of the Dead, of the Office for Christmas, the spectacle of the days of Holy Week, the sublime chant of the *Exultet*, in comparison with which the

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1. Paul Claudel, *Ma Conversion*, *Revue de la Jeunesse*, 1913.

most inspired accents of Sophocles and Pindar seemed to me insipid, overwhelmed me with respect, joy, thankfulness, repentance, and adoration."

A little of that appreciation underlies the following pages. I am deeply grateful to many who, remotely and recently, have helped me to feel and to express it. I am specially indebted for encouragement, suggestions, and books — an immense boon in these difficult times—to Very Rev. Fr. G. M. Cussen O.P. Provincial, Very Rev. Fr. Aegidius Doolan O.P. S.T.M., Rev. Fr. Anselm Moynihan O.P., and to my colleagues Professor Alfred O'Rahilly and Rev. Professor Dr. James.



## I.

### *THE LITURGY OF THE DEAD*

In the experience of anyone who has had the singular happiness of getting an insight into the Liturgy, moments of initiation into the Liturgy of the Dead will stand out with special vividness. All that is true of the Church's prayer in general is equally true of her prayer for the dead. We may remind ourselves of what that means : that there is special power in the prayer of the whole Mystical Body united with the mind and heart of Christ ; that it is a direct expression of the Communion of Saints ; that it is ancient and venerable and full of doctrinal truth, and can therefore claim our glad and docile acceptance. But even before we rise to these thoughts,—and helping us to rise to them,—we find something in the common and public prayer of the Church for the dead that calls out in us an immediate response.

The Church has a truly divine understanding of the nature of her members. She takes account not only of our duties as intelligent creatures, but of our complex needs as sensitive human beings. She points us heavenwards, but stoops down to exhort, to inspire, to console. Now no experience searches

us to the depths of our being like death ; the death of our beloved, of our friends and contemporaries, of mere acquaintances even and of strangers when they pass suddenly or violently out of life. These things test us home ; reminding us too that we ourselves are running but a brief span. How can we face bravely so terrible a fact as death ?

The prayers of the Church are there, to rouse, like nothing else, our faith, our hope, our courage. The least study of the Masses for the Dead with their variable parts to suit different persons and occasions is a perfect revelation in this respect. The three different Gospels of these Masses all repeat to us words of Christ concerning the certainty of resurrection. But the passage most charged with feeling, and fullest of divine and human comfort, is that appointed for the days of death, burial, month's mind : the days on which vivid memories surge up in full tide and threaten almost to submerge our courage. The Epistle on the same days meets the same need, where St. Paul teaches his converts the truth about "them that are asleep", "them who have slept through Jesus" ; and urges not only the Corinthians but ourselves to comfort one another with the sure hope of being one day together always with them and with the Lord. The Masses for the Dead plead humbly for mercy and forgiveness, plead even with trembling in the Sequence, but they resolve themselves into trust and hope.

Again, the ritual of Burial, too little followed and understood, is capable of lifting us above the bitterest grief to a glimpse of death as the beginning of life,

of lifting us to a plane on which we can transcend our human sorrow. The ritual of the Burial of Little Children has in this respect a beauty and a consolation all its own.

In the Office of the Dead we naturally find the same recurring ideas as in the Mass and Burial Service; we find even many of the same words. It has indeed less of the poignancy of the moment, has, if one may so express it, a wider view and sweep; it has an inexhaustible variety in its depth, a stilling and awe-striking solemnity. It rises, not only at the time of death but in unforgetting continuity, from the living Church, as from a vast choir that is always renewing itself. It rises in accents of praise and thanksgiving: the Invitatory<sup>1</sup> at Matins, *Come let us adore the King, to whom all things live*, followed by *Come let us rejoice in the Lord*, and the rest, is a whole meditation on the meaning of life and death. It sways back and forth in never-ceasing movement, in accents of lamentation, pain, fear, joy, hope, supplication. It gives voice to the countless multitudes who have passed before us into the invisible world, like most of us in life not pure enough for the vision of God; succeeding one another so endlessly, that a poet thinks of them as a sea of waters surging beneath him,—such a sea of waters as that mentioned in the Apocalypse: *the waters which thou sawest . . . are peoples and nations and tongues*.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Omitted in Dominican Rite. It did not occur in the oldest Roman Office (Batiffol, *History of the Roman Breviary*, pp. 151, 100).

2. Apoc. xvii, 15.

It is no wonder indeed that a great Catholic poet like Claudel, after Dante and Newman,<sup>3</sup> found lofty inspiration in the doctrine of Purgatory and in the Church's prayer for the dead. This elemental poetry of the Liturgy,—this humanity, this power of stirring and stimulating our spiritual nature,—is an outflow and consequence of the correspondence, the pre-established harmony, between the things of God and the soul of man. And yet it is a quite secondary thing. The Liturgy in its essence is prayer: adoration, thanksgiving, repentance, petition; uttered by the Church in union with its Head. The Liturgy of the Dead is that same common prayer, offered now by the Church militant in the name and on behalf of the Church suffering, and in union with Our Lady and the whole Church triumphant. This we see by the Confiteor, Preface, Communicantes, of the Mass, the responsory *Subvenite* when the body of the dead is taken to the Church; and the beautiful antiphon at burial *In paradisum deducant te angeli*.<sup>4</sup> Yes, the poetry of the Liturgy is a secondary thing; but it may be

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<sup>3</sup> Fr. Thurston, in *The Memory of our Dead*, Chap. VI, quotes other examples of the same inspiration.

<sup>4</sup> Cardinal Schuster puts these two prayers "among the most precious treasures surviving" from the ancient funeral liturgy. (*The Sacramentary*, I, p. 207). They are as follows:

Come to his (her) assistance, ye saints of God, meet him (her), ye angels of the Lord, receiving his (her) soul, offering it in the sight of the Most High.—May Christ, who has called thee, receive thee, and may the angels conduct thee into Abraham's bosom.—Receiving his (her) soul, offering it in the sight of the Most High.—Eternal rest give to him (her), O Lord, and let perpetual light

a step towards appreciating and using the great solemn form of intercession provided for us in the Office of the Dead.

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shine upon him (her).—Offering it in the sight of the Most High.

May the Angels lead thee into Paradise: may the martyrs receive thee at thy coming, and lead thee into the holy city of Jerusalem. May the choir of angels receive thee, and mayest thou have eternal rest with Lazarus, who once was poor.

## II.

### *THE OFFICE OF THE DEAD*

The Office of the Dead is obligatory on the clergy only on All Souls' Day and on some special occasions. Matins and Lauds of the Dead, for instance, are recited before the solemn Requiem at the burial of a priest, and the laity have then an opportunity of getting acquainted with the Office. In many religious orders it is regularly recited and it is recommended to Tertiaries. The reason is obvious. After the Mass itself, the Office is the most powerful form of intercession; for it is a part of the official prayer of the Church, now specially intent on commemorating and helping the dead. "Prayer that is said in the person and unity of Holy Church is never left unsped", says a medieval writer.<sup>1</sup> As the Church prays with Christ, we can think of our Divine Lord as putting these prayers on our lips, as sharing in them, as so to say taking a special interest in them. A passage in the Life of St. Gertrude<sup>2</sup> suggests to us to neglect nothing that might arouse that consciousness of fellowship, and might quicken our faith and fervour in spite of what may sometimes

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<sup>1</sup> In *The Myroure of Oure Ladye*, E.E.T.S., 1873, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Faure, *Consolations of Purgatory*, p. 99.



seem to be the formality of the Office. "After having recited with the nuns of her convent the Psalter and Office for the Dead for the faithful departed, the . . . Saint asked Our Lord why He was so well pleased by the recitation of those psalms, and why the souls received such help and consolation from it, considering that this long repetition of psalms and prayers is more likely to produce weariness and distaste than fervour and devotion. The Divine Master answered : 'My affection for the souls in Purgatory, and My desire to see them delivered from their sufferings, make Me approve of everything that can contribute to their relief. You must know, however, that, although the recitation of the Office gives great relief to these poor souls, its fruits are more abundant, and its effect more certain, if it is accompanied with fervour and devotion'."

In its present form, the Office of the Dead is perhaps of the 7th or 8th century :<sup>3</sup> there are explicit references to its recitation in monasteries, as an established custom, round about the year 800. But it has features, some of which we also find in the Office of Holy Week, a character of bareness and simplicity that takes us back to the first centuries of the Church. We know that the Divine Office went through a long period of development before settling down, some time in the 6th century, into its present form. Terce, Sext, and None, from being hours of

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<sup>3</sup> Catholic Encyclopædia, Art. *Office of the Dead*, and D.A.C.L., Art. *Office Divin.* Batiffol, *History of the Roman Breviary*, p. 150, writes of the canonical office at Rome that "to find the office of the dead established, we must come down to the eighth century."

private prayer, came to be officially observed ; Prime and Compline were introduced, at first probably in monastic use ; the Gloria was added to the psalms, by Pope St. Damasus it is said ;<sup>4</sup> short invocations and the use of hymns became general. In the Office of the Dead the psalms have no Gloria, there are no hymns, absolution, blessing, no *Tu autem Domine*, no introductory versicles.

Nor are there any Little Hours. The vigils of Sunday and the great feasts in the primitive Church consisted of Vespers, Matins,<sup>5</sup> and Lauds, and ended with Mass. The germ of the Office of the Dead may be seen in the early custom of spending the night before burial in psalmody by the body. A text of about 400 A.D.<sup>6</sup> describes formal public prayer for the dead led by the bishop, and prescribes that the third day after death be "celebrated in psalms, lessons, and prayers, because of Him who on the third day rose again," and that the same thing be done on the 9th and 40th days, and on the anniversary, "according to ancient usage." This ancient usage of the anniversary went back to apostolic times. In that, and in keeping the third and other days of remembrance, the earliest Christians simply

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4. The attribution is doubtful, but in any case there was an immediate reason in the 4th century for proclaiming faith in the Trinity. The divinity of Christ had been denied by the Arians, that of the Holy Ghost by the Macedonians. St. Damasus confirmed the second General Council of Constantinople, which in 381 condemned both heresies.

5. Formerly called Vigils or Nocturns, while Lauds were called *Laudes Matutinae*.

6. The *Apostolic Constitutions*, quoted in *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Art. *Requiem*.

followed a custom current among the Greeks and Romans before the time of Christ. "In this custom taken in itself", writes Fr. Thurston,<sup>7</sup> "the Church saw no evil, but for the pagan sacrifices and possibly riotous banquetings, she substituted, at any rate in the earliest times, her *agapae*<sup>8</sup> ending with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, while at a later date the Sacrifice of the Mass was preceded by the *Vigiliae Mortuorum*, or Night Office of the Dead, leaving the intervals of time practically unchanged." St. Ambrose speaks of celebrating the 7th day<sup>9</sup> "which is symbolical of fraternal repose;" he says that some keep the 3rd and 30th, others the 7th and 40th. We have a survival of these observances in the prayers of the Missal appointed for the 3rd, 7th, and 30th days; and in the Month's Mind.

It cannot but increase our interest in the Office, to know that we of the twentieth century are thus in the full stream of Catholic tradition and practice, flowing down to us uninterruptedly from the early Church. The old rites and formulas, to quote Mgr. Duchesne,<sup>10</sup> come down to us "hallowed by the devotion of hundreds of generations. How many centuries people have been praying thus! What

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7. *The Memory of Our Dead*, p. 139.

8. Love-feasts.

9. The Greeks and Romans had kept a nine-day period of mourning (which curiously survives in the *novendiali* at the death of a Pope). The 7th day corresponds to the Christian introduction of the week, and is recommended by St. Augustine. See *The Memory of Our Dead*, p. 138; and D.A.C.L., Art. *Défunts*.

10. In the Preface to *Origines du Culte Chrétien*.

emotions, joy, love, tears, have been poured out over these books, these rites, these formulas!"

The Office of the Dead has only the primitive Hours of Vespers, Matins, and Lauds. At Vespers there are five psalms with antiphons, followed by the Magnificat with its antiphon; then the Pater noster, and—though not always—a psalm of praise without antiphon; lastly versicles and a prayer or prayers. Matins consists of Psalm 94 with an Invitatory, and three Nocturns. Each Nocturn has three psalms with antiphons, and three Lessons each followed by a responsory. Lauds has three psalms, then a canticle and another psalm, all with antiphons; then the Benedictus with its antiphon, followed by the Pater noster, by the De profundis—though not always, by versicles, and a prayer or prayers.

While for the sake of mental clearness we thus break up the Office and enumerate its component parts, it will soon be apparent that the parts fit back into a coherent and very living sequence. Each Hour has its character; and the whole is composed, writes a German commentator,<sup>11</sup> "after the manner of a drama . . . When the choir chants the *Invitatorium* as a prelude to the Matins, or sometimes without an introduction, as at Lauds and Vespers, the Holy Souls appear and make their voices heard. The old *Ordo Romanus X* directs that the office should be recited '*in persona defuncti*'."<sup>12</sup> This

11. F. A. Hoeyneck, quoted by Keppler, p. 45 ff.

12. 'In the person of the dead.' *Ordo Romanus X*, according to Mabillon, is of XIth century.

refers to the psalms, lessons, and all but one of the responsories. In that responsory (*Qui Lazarum resuscitasti*,<sup>13</sup> after the second Lesson), and in the versicles, the living "turn to God and plead for the Poor Souls in Christian charity." And then "Above the voices of the Poor Souls . . . above the voices of their brethren on earth . . . there now arises the voice of Christ: '*Omne, quod dat mihi Pater, ad me veniet, et eum, qui venit ad me, non eiciam foras*' (Vespers), and '*Ego sum resurrectio et vita, qui vivit et credit in me, non morietur in aeternum*'"<sup>14</sup> (Lauds). These two antiphons are spoken *in persona Christi*,<sup>15</sup> just as the psalms and lessons are spoken *in persona defuncti*." The prayers form the conclusion of the drama in which we have been, so to say, both actors and spectators; and the last *Requiescant in pace* is a kind of epilogue.

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<sup>13</sup>. Thou who didst raise up Lazarus.

<sup>14</sup>. "All that the Father giveth to Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to me I will not cast out."—"I am the Resurrection and the Life . . . everyone that liveth, and believeth in Me, shall not die for ever."

<sup>15</sup>. In the person of Christ.



### III.

#### *THE SOULS IN PURGATORY*

It will certainly also stimulate our intelligence and our devotion—in both senses of the word, devout feeling and the gift of our best effort—if we remember what the Church teaches and allows us to hold about the state of the souls in Purgatory.

What we know of Purgatory as an article of faith is conveniently summed up in the old familiar Catechism answer : Purgatory is a place or state of punishment in the other life where some souls suffer for a time before they can go to heaven. The Reformers had called this doctrine, and the practice so closely linked with it of prayer for the dead, into question ; therefore the Council of Trent following the earlier Councils of Lyons and Florence defined it exactly. This bare doctrinal fact has had its meaning unfolded by theologians, drawing on the consensus of ancient tradition and studying the Scriptures ; using the resources of philosophy also in what it reveals of the nature of the soul. For our present purpose, we need not dwell on these proofs, nor on the reasons in general which urge us to pray for the dead. But it will perhaps stimulate our interest to recall two of the less known early



examples of the constant practice. St. Perpetua,<sup>1</sup> who is remembered in the Mass, was martyred at Carthage in 203, and her story, partly told by herself, is a genuine document and one of the most moving stories of the age of the Persecutions. She prayed, she tells us, with tears, night and day, for her little brother Dinocrates,<sup>2</sup> and saw him in a vision pass from a place of gloom and suffering to a place of light and refreshment. There was abundance of water there, "And when he was satisfied, he went away from the water to play joyously, after the manner of children. . . . Then I understood", for Perpetua knows her visions to be symbolical, "that he was translated from the place of punishment." A century and a half later, when the Persecutions were over but Catholics were confronted with doubts and denials, a bishop, St. Epiphanius,<sup>3</sup> answered one who objected to prayers for the dead that as the departed members of the Church still exist and live with Christ, to pray for them is no stranger than to pray for friends on a journey.<sup>4</sup> Friends on a journey that one day we

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1. Ante-Nicene Library, Vol. XIII. See also Owen, *Acts of the Early Martyrs*, Clarendon Press, 1927; and Shewring, *The Passion of SS. Perpetua and Felicity*, Sheed and Ward, 1931.

2. He was only seven, but St. Augustine, who refers several times to Dinocrates in the treatise *De Anima et ejus origine*, points out that "boys of that age can already lie and speak truth, confess or deny". And we should perhaps allow for precocity due to the age and the climate.

3. D.A.C.L., Art. Mort: Art., *Défunts*.

4. "The very first Christian apologist, Aristides, who wrote about the year 150, bears witness to this community spirit of the primitive Church which reached even beyond the grave . . . . 'When a just man is taken from their midst, they

shall make : that is a striking statement of what the separation of death amounts to and of how the distance can be bridged.

To picture the conditions of life on that journey, we are helped chiefly by the deductions of theology ; to some extent also by meditations, visions, private revelations, of holy people and even of canonised saints, to which we are allowed to give credence ; and thirdly by the Liturgy rightly understood, according to the famous formula : "Let the rule of prayer establish the rule of belief."<sup>5</sup>

There are two views of the effect on the Holy Souls of the pains of Purgatory. One,<sup>6</sup> that at the moment of death they are fully purified from sin and its effects, but yet pay the penalty for forgiven sin, exacted by divine justice, which was left unpaid on earth. The other, that besides this penalty, or more exactly through patient endurance of it, they are gradually purified of the stains left by sin, of the roots of sin, of all the spiritual faults and frailties which they still retained at the moment of death. This view, held by St. Catherine of

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rejoice and give thanks to God and escort his body as if he only went from one place to another'." (Bartmann, *Purgatory*, p. 162.)

<sup>5</sup>. Attributed to Pope St. Celéstine I: "*ut legem credendi statuat lex supplicandi.*" The words occur in a document, probably of other authorship, but appended to a letter which he wrote against Pelagianism in 431 to the bishops of Gaul. The whole sentence is very apt to a study of the Liturgy. "Let us consider the sacred words (*sacramenta*) of the priestly prayers, which have come down from the Apostles, and are uniformly used in the whole world and in every Catholic church, so that the rule of prayer may establish the rule of belief." The idea is often more shortly expressed: *lex orandi, lex credendi*.

<sup>6</sup>. This view is set forth by Abbot Vonier in *The Human Soul*.

Genoa, is expressed by St. Thomas in the *Summa*,<sup>7</sup> and explained in a passage of the *Contra Gentiles* :<sup>8</sup>

“The rational creature cannot be raised to that vision of God unless it be wholly purified, since that vision surpasses the entire natural faculty of that creature. . . . Now the soul is defiled by sin, whereby it adheres inordinately to things beneath it : and in this life it is cleansed from this defilement by Penance and the other sacraments. . . . Sometimes however it happens that this cleansing is not entirely completed in this life, but the soul still owes a debt of punishment, through either neglect, or occupations, or because it has been surprised by death. Nevertheless, it does not for that reason deserve to be wholly deprived of its reward, since these things may happen without mortal sin. Consequently after this life, that soul will need to be cleansed . . . . Therefore the souls of the just, who have something that could have been cleansed in this world, are debarred from receiving their reward, until they have suffered a purgatorial punishment.”

It is borne out by the very name Purgatory ;<sup>9</sup> it

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7. S.T. Suppl. Q.71, Art. 6, premiss to Obj.3: “Souls are in Purgatory in order that they may be purified there, and being pure may come to the kingdom.” And Reply: “The purifying of the soul by the punishment of Purgatory is nothing else than the expiation of the guilt that hinders it from obtaining glory.”

8. *Contra Gentiles*, IV, c. 91.

9. Used in 1254 by Pope Innocent IV. See Faber, *All for Jesus*, p. 354. But equivalent expressions had long been current.

seems to be the more widely accepted, and to be reflected in many of the psalms of the Office of the Dead.<sup>10</sup>

It is agreed that because of the spiritual nature of the sufferers the suffering is intense beyond anything we can conceive in this world. There is, it is widely held, the pain of sense through fire,<sup>11</sup> which in some mysterious way affects the disembodied spirit. It suffers perhaps a sense of imprisonment in fire. One writer<sup>12</sup> speaks of different tortures in all the faculties "corresponding to the nature of the sins committed and the degree of culpability contracted in each sin;" another<sup>13</sup> of the sense of guilt, "the crushing consciousness of having offended God." But the Holy Souls suffer incomparably more from the pain of loss: that is, having a vivid sense of their own sin and of God's majesty, understanding as they never could on earth the happiness of enjoying His presence, they have a tortured longing to see Him and feel it agony to be shut out from Him. "The whole condition, the whole life, the sole occupation of these souls is hungering for the sight of God."<sup>14</sup> All this pain may be terribly long-drawn out, whatever be the meaning of duration in the world of spirits. And it is

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10. See, for example, Wolter's commentary on the Miserere.

11. "St. Robert Bellarmine declares that we must hold it for certain that there is punishment, 'whether we conceive it as a real fire or a metaphorical one, whether we think of it as a pain of the senses or as the pain caused by the delay of the beatific vision of God.'" Bartmann, *Purgatory*, p. 157.

12. Faure, *Consolations of Purgatory*, p. 55.

13. Bartmann, p. 231.

14. Faure, p. 62.

not lessened, as pain often is on earth, by failing powers of perception, or by passing distractions that bring respite.

The dark and fearful aspect of Purgatory, its positive suffering and punitive character, used to be much insisted on in medieval times, and depicted with terrifying realistic imagery in popular representations and preaching. The higher and more spiritual conception of purification by turning to God in intense love and patient endurance of the imposed pain<sup>15</sup> brings with it the marvellous view of the happiness of Purgatory on which St. Catherine of Genoa dwells, and which since her time has been widely and authoritatively approved. The Holy Souls are at peace; they suffer willingly, patiently, with complete submission to God's will; joyfully even because they are being purified from their unworthiness; with gratitude because their salvation is secure; with certain hope of seeing and possessing God. "If then we imagine Purgatory as a prison in which souls are detained, we must take care not to think of it as a dungeon whose inmates dash themselves with impotent rage against the iron bars that confine them. Purgatory is no hell-like dungeon—rather is it a hospital where ailing souls patiently await complete restoration to health."<sup>16</sup> They adore, love, trust, pray:<sup>17</sup> we are permitted to

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<sup>15</sup>. Cf. Bartmann, *Purgatory*, p. 121ff.

<sup>16</sup>. *Ibid.* pp. 125, 126.

<sup>17</sup>. "If we conceive prayer as a raising of the mind and the heart to God, according to the definition of St. John Damascene, it is simply inconceivable that the souls in Purgatory should be



believe that they pray for their friends on earth and for us who help them, though their prayers cannot merit their own deliverance. They live for truth, love, justice, God :

“O happy suffering soul ! for it is safe,  
Consumed, yet quicken'd by the glance of God.”<sup>13</sup>

Dante,<sup>19</sup> steeped in Catholic feeling, put on the lips of the patient souls in the first circle of his Purgatory a very beautiful paraphrase<sup>20</sup> of the Lord's Prayer.

“Our Father, Thou who dwellest in the Heaven,  
Not bound by space, but by love more intense  
Which Thou unto Thy primal works hast given,  
Praised be Thy Name and Thine omnipotence  
By every creature, as 'tis meet and right  
To render thanks to Thy sweet effluence.

Upon us may Thy kingdom's peace alight,  
To which we cannot of ourselves arise,—  
Unless it come,—with all our reason's might.

As of their will Thine angels sacrifice  
Make to Thee, while their lips 'Hosanna' say,  
So may men offer all their will's device!

Our daily manna give to us to-day,

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unable to pray, for surely they can do no other than live in the presence of God and pay Him homage?” (Bartmann, p. 193). See also Keppler, chap. xii.

<sup>18</sup>. Newman, *Dream of Gerontius*.

<sup>19</sup>. Bishop Keppler quotes him freely, and says that in him “the theologian and the poet walk hand in hand,” and that “perfectly correct and enlightened theological views are conceived and put forth with the highest poetical tenderness and delicacy of feeling.” (*The Poor Souls in Purgatory*, p. 49).

<sup>20</sup>. Dean Plumptre's translation, *Purg.* Canto XI.



Without which whoso through this desert drear  
Journeys, goes back, though pressing on his way:

And as the trespass we from others bear  
We forgive each, so, Lord, do Thou forgive  
Of bounty, nor to count our merits care.

Our virtue, which so soon doth harm receive,  
Put not to peril with our ancient foe,  
But from his evil sting deliverance give.

This final prayer, dear Lord, from us doth flow,  
Not for ourselves, for we no longer need,  
But for their sakes whom we have left below.”<sup>21</sup>

So praying for themselves and us ‘God speed!’  
Those souls went on their way beneath their weight.

In the Mass for the Dead, the idea of dread and terror prevails in the *Dies irae*, a medieval poem on the favourite theme of the Judgment; while the Memento for the Dead pleads for those who “sleep the sleep of peace” and “rest in Christ”. This Memento is found in all liturgies from the third century, and shows the tone of the earliest Christian prayers, based on St. Paul’s teaching (I Cor. xv). In the Office the darker presentment is uppermost in the readings from Job, “the nine terrible lessons” as Claudel calls them, and in some of the responsories. The rest is more peaceful; and the whole resolves itself into the praise of the Benedictus, and the humble confidence of the De profundis. *Mercy and truth have met together; justice and peace have kissed each other*, as we read in Psalm 84.

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<sup>21</sup>. Dante represents Purgatory as a mountain, rising above the southern hemisphere.

Cardinal Schuster<sup>22</sup> dwells on this happy view of death in his admirable commentary on the Commemoration of All Souls. "The spirit of the Church is not a spirit of harshness but of tenderness and mercy, in which she imitates the example of Jesus, who is meek and humble of heart." — "She purified and spiritualized" the funeral rites of classical antiquity, "handing them on to the new generations of the Middle Ages transfigured by a new thought which gave a sense of joy and life to the Liturgy of the departed, the thought that they would rise once more like the risen Redeemer. Therefore all that was dismal or frightening disappeared. There were no more emblems of death, skulls or cross-bones traced upon the draperies; all spoke instead of peace and serene hope." The Preface of the Dead is an adaptation of an ancient Preface. "Why should we mourn, when those who have left us have suffered no loss but have rather gained all? . . . Because of this the early Christians avoided the word *mortuus* in their inscriptions, and instead made use of the expressions *dormit*, *depositus*, *defunctus*. To this day the Greeks intone the Alleluia at their funerals, and during Easter Week they make use at the burials which may occur at that time of the Office of the Resurrection of Christ."

All prayers and good works, certain even, we are told, when performed in sin, can make satisfaction for the dead.<sup>23</sup> But they are more profitable when

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<sup>22</sup>. *The Sacramentary*, V, pp. 237, 214-15, 227.

<sup>23</sup>. See St. Thomas, S.T., Suppl. Q.71, Art.3; and cf. Bartmann p. 171.

they come from a pure heart ; and are more effectual in proportion to our fervour. "The more love, humility, contrition, and devotion you bring, and the more penal your work is, the more precious will it be in the sight of God, and the greater miracles will it do in Purgatory ; rejoicing the afflicted souls, quenching their flames, and converting Purgatory into Paradise."<sup>24</sup>

There are two considerations among many that may intensify our efforts to achieve that great result.

*Bear ye one another's burdens*, says St. Paul ; and St. John Chrysostom insists : "God wills that we help one another."—"We can only help the dead by way of intercession . . . Only charity can build a bridge between them and ourselves—charity that never falleth away, that never wearies in her efforts to do good, that believeth all things, hopeth all things. Hence it also believes and hopes to set in motion the stream of divine mercy for the relief of the departed."<sup>25</sup> Now, in the Mass and in the Office, we do not merely pray for our own friends, but for all who have departed this life in God's grace. In this terrible time of war, for instance, hundreds and thousands of human beings are daily hurled into eternity, who have failed in Christ's service, or who have never even had the chance consciously to know Him, the Light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world. Of these many surely, through God's boundless mercy, will in their suffering have been given the grace

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<sup>24</sup>. *Two Ancient Treatises on Purgatory*, p. 257.

<sup>25</sup>. Bartmann, p. 168.

of final repentance; or will have been saved despite their invincible ignorance through the hidden workings of His light and grace.<sup>26</sup> But what an insistent claim all those unknown souls have on us and how sorely they need our prayers!

The other consideration is that "the Psalms are the common property of the living and of the departed souls in Purgatory, and belong to the Suffering Church as a prelude to glory (Greg. Naz. Or., 40). They accompany earth's pilgrims through the trials of life, and remain with them as friends and comforters in Purgatory, until they are received into the eternal home."<sup>27</sup> Among their many meanings, they reflect the condition of the dead. In using them we can feel that we are, in virtue of the Communion of Saints, quite literally speaking in their name. We can, to use a homely phrase, enter into the feelings of the suffering souls when we are encouraged<sup>28</sup> to hold that their state has some resemblance to our state on earth, but as it were sublimated. We are, like them, all the time in God's irresistible hand; our being is open to His pure and searching gaze, though we forget, through earth's distractions. His justice and His mercy are also for us, though here the reign of justice does not yet prevail, and merit is still possible. We see in glimpses what we are, and the immense difference between that and what we must some day be. "As soon as a soul enters into the next world it sees

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<sup>26</sup>. See Card. Gasparri, *The Catholic Catechism*, p. 107.

<sup>27</sup>. Keppler, p. 123-124.

<sup>28</sup>. Cf. St. Catherine of Genoa; and Bartmann, pp. 123ff.

things in an incomparably clearer light. Under the impulse of this new knowledge of self, the soul resolves to bring itself in perfect harmony with the will of God and to cast away everything, however small, that would stand in the way. This is true penance—our Lord called it a change of mind (*metanoia*)’’.<sup>29</sup> Our prayer is, or should be, largely praise and thanksgiving; spiritual writers tell us that one of the chief torments of the Holy Souls is to be still shut out, through their own fault, from giving full praise and glory to God in heaven. We make acts of charity and contrition; theirs are most continuous, intense, pitiful. We try to accept God’s will; they, understanding His justice, “have such a pleasure in their torments as cannot be comprehended in this miserable life, which is full of self-love, except by some few noble and generous souls that love God only for Himself, and that so purely as not to make any reckoning of their own concerns and sufferings.”<sup>30</sup>

We can understand, even if dimly, this passage from a recent writer<sup>31</sup>: “In the justice of God, the Holy Souls see the fitness of their punishment: in His Light, the malice of Sin: in His Sanctity, the stain of the least imperfection: in His Being, their nothingness: in His ineffable Essence, their intrinsic need of Him. The Holy Souls plunge deep into God’s Hiddenness, God’s Silence, God’s Immensities of Solitude”. And we can make our

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<sup>29</sup>. Bartmann, p. 126.

<sup>30</sup>. *Two Ancient Treatises*, pp. 145ff.

<sup>31</sup>. *The Divine Crucible of Purgatory*, p. 31.



own in spirit the prayer of Gerontius to his Angel :

“Take me away and in the lowest deep

There let me be,

And there in hope the lone night-watches keep

Told out for me.

There, motionless and happy in my pain,

Lone, not forlorn,—

There will I sing my sad perpetual strain,

Until the morn.

There will I sing, and soothe my stricken breast,

Which ne'er can cease

To throb, and pine, and languish, till possess

Of its Sole Peace.

There will I sing my absent Lord and Love :—

Take me away

That sooner I may rise, and go above,

And see Him in the truth of everlasting day”.



## IV.

### THE PSALMS AND ANTIPHONS

The Psalms in the Office of the Dead do not, as they often do in the Divine Office, follow one another numerically. They were chosen because of some verse that seemed more particularly appropriate to the state of the dead, and is used as antiphon. We can recite the Hours with more understanding and devotion if we look carefully at the antiphons. People were very familiar with them in medieval times: the Hour of Vespers was called *Placebo*<sup>1</sup> from the first word of the antiphon to the first psalm; and the Hour of Matins similarly *Dirige*, from which we get the English word for a lament for the dead, dirge.

#### (1) VESPERS

##### Antiphons at Vespers

The note of the Vesper antiphons is suffering, but also the absence of fear, and almost tranquillity. *I will please the Lord in the land of the living; though not yet awhile, for Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged.* Meantime the Holy

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<sup>1</sup>. *Placebo*, I will please; *Dirige*, make straight, or direct.

Souls are in safety : *The Lord keepeth thee, may the Lord keep thy soul.* They rely on God's mercy : *If Thou wilt mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand it? Despise not, O Lord, the works of Thy hands.* And we borrow words from St. John's revelation to express our sense of their happy state : *I heard a voice from heaven saying to me : Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; along with the positive promise of Our Lord Himself : All that the Father giveth to Me shall come to Me ; and him that cometh to Me I will not cast out.*<sup>2</sup>

St. Gertrude prays for the fulfilment of that promise in words<sup>3</sup> that seem specially appropriate to Vespers of the Dead : "O Love, . . . when I lie down in death give me to draw eternal life from Thee. When I go forth from this land of exile lead me up to Thyself . . . open to me then the Holy of Holies. Make me to enter in, that I may without delay behold the God of gods in Sion, even Him whose face my heart pineth to see."

#### *Psalm 114.*

This psalm, under the antiphon *I will please the Lord in the land of the living*, is a song of fervent thanks for deliverance from danger and tribulation, and of triumphant faith.

For the Holy Souls, all the dangers of earth, what one of the Collects calls *mortalia contagia*, the perilous contacts of mortal life, are over. They have escaped slipping into eternal death with its ever-

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<sup>2</sup>. See p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>. Quoted by Graf, *The Church's Daily Prayer*, p. 115.

lasting sorrow. They love God and bear their present *trouble and sorrow* with patience, confidence in the *mercy* of God, submission to His *justice*. They cannot, it is true, win for themselves the answer to the prayer *O Lord, deliver my soul*, but they long for this deliverance which we ask as their spokesmen. They know that in God is *rest*, and that He will look with favour upon them *in the land of the living*. We who release them by our prayers, are sending them there, to praise God for ever.

In v.1, the Lord is the implied object of love and the tenses may be altered to read: *I love the Lord because He hath heard*.—*In my days* means all my life.—The *sorrows of death* are also found in Psalm 17.—The *perils of hell*, in the old Hebrew sense, are the dread and anguish of the sad abode of Sheol,<sup>4</sup> to which they believed the dead were consigned.—The *little ones* are the weak and helpless.—*Humbled* means cast down, downcast.—God is the *rest* of the soul.—My *soul, eyes, feet*, have been kept from eternal death.—The true *land of the living* in the Christian dispensation is heaven. Psalm 55 expresses the same gratitude and confidence.

### Psalm 119.

This, the first of the Gradual Psalms, under the antiphon *Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged*, is the lament of a hard driven soul, longing for the

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<sup>4</sup> See below in Section VI, on the Lessons.

reign of God's truth and for peace as the reward of patience.

The Holy Souls cry out to the Lord in their suffering. In the light of God's truth, they shrink with the horror repeatedly expressed in the Psalms from the thought of the deceitful tongue. It often offends by defending or excusing sin.<sup>5</sup> The Miserere, used at Lauds, is on the contrary a true and clear-sighted expression of humility, as in Psalm 31: *I have acknowledged my sin to Thee, and my injustice I have not concealed.* The sharp arrows of God's justice pierce them home; the fire of Purgatory burns away every stain. They are still in a strange land, and their weary sojourning is prolonged.

In v.1, we may take the sense to be present.—*Wicked lips and a deceitful tongue*, those of others, but our own also.—*Given and added* express penalty on penalty.—*Sharp arrows and coals* are a metaphor for retribution. *Coals that lay waste* are explained to mean broom-fires, set in vengeance to the dwellings of nomads in the desert.—*Inhabitants of Cedar* are hostile nomads of Arabia, and suggest the distress of living in a strange, unhappy land of exile.

### Psalm 120.

This, the second Gradual Psalm, under the

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<sup>5</sup> Psalm 35: *The unjust hath said within himself that he would sin . . . The words of his mouth are iniquity and guile.* Dom McLaughlin (*Purgatory or the Church Suffering*, p. 8) speaks of "the all-pervading habit of untruth, that seeks excuses for telling itself that the sin is not sinful."

antiphon *The Lord keepeth thee from all evil, may the Lord keep thy soul*, looks up to God on high, with entire confidence in His protection.

It expresses the holy longing and confidence of the suffering Souls. They look ceaselessly up to the heavenly Jerusalem, trusting themselves to God in faith and patience. Help comes to them from the Lord, in response to every offering of the Church on earth on their behalf. Their going out from Purgatory and their coming in to heaven are hastened, and are sure.

The *mountains*, literally the mountains of Jerusalem to which the pilgrims were journeying. For us, and the Holy Souls, the Church, *the city set on a mountain* on earth, and the heavenly Jerusalem.—Literally God wards off the burning sun by day and the baleful influences attributed to the moon by night; that is, He protects us day and night.

### Psalm 129.

This psalm, under the antiphon *If Thou wilt mark iniquities, O Lord, Lord, who shall stand it*, is a humble plea for pity, and an expression of trust.

The Holy Souls have a much stronger sense of their *iniquities* than on earth. Obedient to God's will they accept their punishment. But they have died in the Lord (Apoc. xiv, 13) and so there is *forgiveness*. They trust, they hope, they wait for the Lord.

This is the psalm that we most constantly apply to the dead. It is therefore worth while

to borrow some passages from Wolter's lengthy commentary. "There resounds unceasingly from the *depths* of the purifying fire the *voice of supplication* and of praise, a double strain of loving lament and hopeful resignation. 'Day to day uttereth speech' of hope, 'and night to night showeth knowledge' of suffering (Ps. 18). 'Deep calleth on deep at the noise of Thy' purifying 'flood-gates, O Lord. All Thy heights and Thy billows have passed over me! —I will say to God: Thou art my support' (Ps. 41).—'Mercy and judgment I will sing to Thee, O Lord! I will sing and I will understand in the unspotted way, when Thou shalt come to me' (Ps. 100) . . . How sweetly must ring in God's *ears* the *supplication* of earth's pilgrims who, not yet sure of their own full *redemption*, pray in ardent love for those who have departed in peace: *Out of the depths* of the valley of tears *I cry to Thee, O Lord*, for our departed brethren. *Let Thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication* with which the 'strong cry' (Heb. v, 7) of Thy only begotten Son, the voice of His atoning blood is joined. *Mark not mine*, nor their, *iniquities*, for how could we *stand* before Thee, the stern Judge? No, remember the *merciful forgiveness* that is *with Thee*, the *law* that Thou hast given: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.' With Thee is *mercy and plentiful redemption*. Therefore *redeem Israel*, Thy people of election suffering in the burning



desert of Purgatory, from all the penalties of *his iniquities*, and lead him graciously into the promised land of the vision of Thy glory."

*Psalm 137.*

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This psalm, under the Antiphon *Despise not, O Lord, the works of Thy hands*, is a cry of acknowledgment of God's gracious mercy, and of confident trust for the future; a call to the great of the earth to recognise God's glory and goodness; a plea for His protection and pity.

God has heard the prayers of the Holy Souls, and brought them in His *mercy and truth* (v.3) safe through the dangers of life. May He now, through the prayers of the living, *multiply strength* in them, and bring them speedily to His *temple*, heaven, up to which they look; and to the company of the angels. They know now, better than in life, how sure is the recourse to God (v.4); how great He is (vv.5 & 6) and how He looks with favour on the lowly and askance at the proud (v.7). Vv.8 and 9 can be compared with the confidence of the boys in the fiery furnace.

*Towards Thy temple*, as the Jews prayed.—  
Thou wilt *multiply* means Thou wilt increase.  
—*The words of Thy mouth*, Thy promises.—  
*To sing in the ways of the Lord* is a Hebrew construction; the sense is to sing of, to extol.—  
V.7 is more explicitly translated by Dr. Boylan, "He looketh on the lowly, but the proud he regardeth from afar." This psalm is followed by a versicle and response from the

Apocalypse, chap. xiv, *I heard a voice from heaven saying to me: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.*

*Psalm 145.*

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This is a song of pure praise, the first of six psalms of praise called the *Little Hallel* (*Hallel* means praise) which conclude the Book of Psalms. It expresses trust in God alone; He is ever faithful; and in His might protects all who are weak, suffering, desolate.

The Holy Souls, though suffering, are united with God by faith and love; therefore they praise Him with joy and confidence. "The hymns of praise and gratitude chanted by the Saints are echoed in the depths by the souls whom the Lord loves and who love the Lord."<sup>6</sup> They know that trust in men is vain. They know that God has brought them safe through the gates of death. Their food is the happiness of heaven. Their fetters still keep them in prison, their eyes do not yet see the glory of God, they are bowed down in suffering; but they are just and the Lord loves them. They are as yet strangers from their true home, are as it were orphaned and widowed. But God reigns and they will praise Him for ever.

*Children of men*, a Hebrew periphrase for *men*.—V.3 means that man is a weak mortal being. His soul shall leave his body; and he shall return to his clay; there will be an end

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<sup>6</sup> Keppler, p. 129.

of the thoughts and plannings of all men : hence the use first of *his* and then of *their*.—V.5, God *keepeth truth*, He is faithful ; God *executeth judgment*, procures justice.—Each verse from 5 to 8 begins with an emphatic repetition of *the Lord*.—V.8, *strangers* may literally be the Jews who were strangers in Babylon. This is very appropriate to God's friends in the exile of Purgatory.

(2) MATINS

Antiphons at Matins

In the First Nocturn the Holy Souls,—we remind ourselves again that we are speaking in their name and voicing what they feel and need,—express awe and dread which resolve themselves into confidence. They have a vivid sense that they are on the way to God, but their way is beset by distress and terror. They pray to God (Ps.5) to give them a straight path to Him, (Ps.6) to deliver them from this death and (Ps.7) from the terror of their enemies.

In the Second Nocturn the note of peace and trust is uppermost. (Ps. 22) God has brought them to a place of pasture ; (Ps.24) He will have pity on the sins of youth and ignorance ; (Ps.26) they look forward confidently to happiness in the true land of the living.

In the Third Nocturn the sense of sin and the note of extreme suffering is strong. (Ps. 39) They implore deliverance and help ; (Ps. 40) they beg to

be healed of their sins; (Ps. 41) the time seems long to them until they see the face of God.

Invitatory.

On more solemn occasions the Invitatory referred to on page 17 is said, and is used as a refrain to Psalm 94, which is similarly recited at Matins in the Divine Office, and in the Little Office of Our Lady.

In Psalm 94 we rejoice before God and praise Him, even, or especially, in the presence of the death of His servants. We adore Him for His goodness and His mighty power. We sorrow for our infidelities and those of the dead; for our and their frequent rebellion against His will and deafness to His voice, which might have brought the penalty of final exclusion from God's rest.

Psalm 5.

FIRST NOCTURN

This psalm, under the antiphon *Direct, O Lord, my way in Thy sight*, is a morning cry: a strong appeal to God to hear, a determination to wait for Him, an acknowledgement of His intangible purity and hatred of sin. But through His mercy, all who have His holy fear will one day go into His House, and even now look towards His temple, that is up to heaven. The soul hopes, trusts, rejoices in God. Contrasting its lot with that of its enemies, the wicked, it recognises that by the abundance of God's mercy it is now under His protection and will reach eternal joy.

The Holy Souls yearn for the morning of the

day when they will stand before God and see him. "They cry to God (through us) to lessen their torment, to deliver them from the pain of darkness, the region of the spirit of lies, to open up the path of light which will lead them to the sight of God" (Wolter).

*Understand*, that is perceive, give heed to.—*I will pray, Thou shalt hear, I will stand*, may all refer to the present.—*All that speak a lie* : God's hatred of deceit and falsehood, sins of the tongue.—*Towards Thy temple*, as the Jews prayed.—*My enemies* : every hostile force. In regard of the Holy Souls it may mean their unutterable sufferings.—*An open sepulchre* : a terrible metaphor suggesting the foulness of an open grave.—*Let them fall from their devices* : let them fail in their schemes.—*Crown* means encompass.

### Psalm 6.

This psalm, under the antiphon *Turn to me, O Lord, and deliver my soul, for there is no one in death that is mindful of Thee*, is a prayer in time of bitter need, the prayer of a soul suffering God's wrath. The anguish is so great as to be physical, as great as the agony of death itself. And then the sufferer comforts himself with the certainty that the Lord has heard his prayer and overcome all the enemies of his soul.

In reference to the Holy Souls, Wolter paraphrases the psalm thus : "Lord, relieve the burning pain of Thy chastising wrath, which penetrates to

the marrow of our *bones*. *Have mercy* on our *weakness*, hasten our deliverance, release us from the flames that the breath of Thy mouth has enkindled. *How long, O Lord*; shall we *labour in our groanings* in this dark house of death? How long shall we *water our couch* of fire with burning tears? Save us from the gate of hell, turn Thy countenance on us, that we, saved, may celebrate Thy memory and announce Thy praise”.

*My bones are troubled, or shaken*: the psalmist feels as if his very physical frame were giving way. The same expression of anguish occurs in the Miserere: *the bones that were humbled*, and in the Canticle of Ezechias: *As a lion he has broken all my bones*.—He expresses intense fear of death, as we shall see in the Canticle of Ezechias and the Lessons from Job, because of the old Hebrew conception of Sheol, translated *infernus*, *hell*. On Christian lips *death* here means eternal death. —*I have laboured*: I am weary.—*Wash my bed, water my couch*: with floods of tears; so as to dim his eyes and make him feel an old man.

### Psalm 7.

This psalm, under the antiphon *Lest at any time the enemy seize upon my soul like a lion, while there is no one to redeem or to save*, like Psalms 5 and 6 has a strong note of fear, distress, and anguish. But like them, it expresses confidence that God, as



a just and mighty judge, will vanquish all evil. It falls into three parts : vv. 1-5 are a passionate protest against an accusation ; vv. 6-12 an appeal to God's judgment of the peoples of the earth ; vv. 13-17 a warning of the punishments in store for sinners ; and it ends with praise of God's justice.

The *enemies* that pursue the Holy Souls are remorse and purgatorial torment. The Church appeals in their name to God, who is just and strong, but also patient and will not *be angry every day*. He has prepared terrible punishments for the wicked, but they, finally delivered, will give glory to His justice and sing eternally to His name.

In v.2, which is used as antiphon, *he* is one of those that persecute, mentioned in the first verse.—*Redeem* : rescue.—In v.3, *this thing* refers to some accusation.—We generally say *on my hands*. Psalm 23 says that the *innocent in hands* will go into God's holy place.—In v.4, *to fall empty* means to be hopeless and helpless.—In v.5, *my soul* is used, as often, for *me*.—In v.6, the *borders* are the territory.—Vv.7 and 8 represent God, in virtue of His law, sitting on His throne (*in altum*) to judge the gathering or congregation (*synagoga*) of the nations.—In v.14, the sense is : He has made his arrows with fiery points.—In vv. 15, 16, 17, *he* is not God, but the sinner ; who is fertile in wickedness, but who falls into his own pit (hunters used to dig pits for wild animals), and whose mischief (*dolor*, the sorrow he has planned to inflict) falls back on his own head.

## SECOND NOCTURN.

Psalm 22.

This psalm, under the antiphon *He hath set me in a place of pasture* expresses gratitude and trust. It represents God as the good Shepherd, providing for all the needs of His sheep; and, with another metaphor, as the gracious provider of a rich banquet, which strengthens and exhilarates.

The Holy Souls, though no longer on earth, are still led by God on their way to the fold of heaven. He has provided pasture and refreshment for them through the prayers of the Church, which draws on the quickening merits of Christ and the saints. "They may through our help obtain a portion of the pasture of the Good Shepherd and sit down at the table of His grace."<sup>7</sup> They are deep in the valley of death, but not alone and forgotten, and they know that they will dwell forever in the house of the Lord.

The Lord *ruleth*, means that He guides as a shepherd his flock.—He brings them to refreshing springs.—*Converted*: turned round, brought back from its straying, refreshed in weariness and exhaustion. *The law of the Lord* is said in Ps. 18 to *convert souls*.—The *paths of justice* are right and safe paths.—The *shadow of death* is literally the shadow of a deep valley or gorge, more full of dangers than the open pasture.—The *rod and staff* are the

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<sup>7</sup>. Keppler, p. 133.

shepherd's stick and crook.—The banquet table is set with food and wine,—this reminds us of the Blessed Eucharist,—and the perfumed oil is poured on the head of the guest, as in Ps. 44 and St. Luke, chap. vii.

### Psalm 24.

This psalm, under the antiphon *Remember not the sins of my youth and my ignorances, O Lord*, is an appeal for forgiveness to an understanding Lord. It is in Hebrew an alphabetical psalm, that is, a series of thoughts, prayers, ejaculations for all times of need, strung on the letters of the alphabet. (Ps. 118 is a similar series of thoughts, prayers, ejaculations, concerning God's law).

We use these petitions in the name of the Holy Souls whose dispositions they reflect. Their enemies are their past temptations and sins, their present remorse and suffering. They know now that their ways were often not the ways of God. But God's covenant (*testamentum*) will one day be completely manifested to them, and these suffering members of God's Church (Israel) will be delivered from their tribulations.

*Be ashamed, be confounded*: be brought to shame and confusion.—The *ways* are the way of life prescribed by God's law, as in Pss. 118 and 142.—The promise of *good things* to the just man and his posterity is symbolical of the good things in store for those that love God.

Psalm 26.

This psalm, under the antiphon *I believe to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living*, expresses a splendid confidence in God, longing for His house, love of His temple. Then it passes to prayer for His pity and mercy, His guidance and defence against enemies.

This, writes Dr. Boylan, might be taken as "the song of an Israelite in exile and oppressed, who longs to share again in the liturgy of the Divine Service." It is therefore evidently most appropriate to Purgatory, and the Church "uses it from the heart of the Holy Souls" (Wolter). We the living can console and help them by offering for them this fervent expression of trust and hope.

The *wicked*, all the psalmist's enemies, are compared to a devouring monster.—*This will I require (requiram), seek after.*—The *delight of the Lord*: all that God delights in.—His *tabernacle*: His temple.—*Exalted*: set up, in a safe place.—*I have gone round* may refer to a liturgical procession in the Temple.—V.13 is easier to understand in Dr. Boylan's translation: "To Thee my heart doth speak; my glance doth seek Thee. I long for Thy countenance, O Lord."—In v.17 the psalmist begs to be led in the right path, so that his enemies may not triumph.—In v.18 *iniquity* has shown itself openly to be lying. This is applied, in Passion Week and Holy Week, to the enemies of Our Lord.

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*Psalm 39.*THIRD NOCTURN.

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This psalm, used here under the antiphon *Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me, look down, O Lord, to help me*, has been described as a Magnificat followed by a De profundis. Up to v.14 it expresses thanksgiving for God's answers to prayer, submission to His will, public acknowledgement of His mercies; the rest is an urgent cry for help and defence. It is used at Tenebrae for Good Friday.

The Holy Souls wait expectantly for God. They glorify Him for His wonderful works. They obediently accept His present will. But they cry out in their manifold suffering, and the remembrance of their sins.

The *pit of misery and the mire of dregs* remind us that pits and cisterns were used as prisons. Joseph's brothers (Gen. xxxvii) cast him into a pit; and Jeremias (Jer. xxxviii) was let down by ropes into a dungeon *wherein there was no water but mire*. Ps. 68 uses the same imagery.<sup>8</sup>—*There is no one like unto Thee in Thy thoughts* means that no one can rise to their level.—*Sacrifice, oblation, holocaust, sin-offering* are so many different kinds of Old Testament sacrifices; but the psalmist, here and in the Miserere, teaches like the prophet Samuel (I Kings xv) that *obedience is better than sacrifices*.—*Ears Thou hast pierced for me*, that I may hear and obey.—*The head of the book*, literally the top end of the stick on

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<sup>8</sup>. Cf. Ps. 26: *He hath exalted me upon a rock*.



which the volume (Lat. *volumen*) was rolled, stands for the book itself.—*The great church* and the *great council* both refer to the assembled Israelites; the Latin *ecclesia* is taken from the Greek, meaning an assembly of the people.—*I was not able to see*, because of eyes dimmed with grief as in Ps.6.—My enemies, that *seek after my soul* and *desire evils to me*, cry in malicious joy “Ha, ha! we have triumphed over him.” This ironical cry also occurs in Pss. 34 and 69.

### *Psalm 40.*

This psalm, under the antiphon *Heal my soul O Lord for I have sinned against Thee*, again expresses deep distress and abandonment. It is, literally, the prayer of a sick man. In vv. 1-3 he reminds himself that those who have shown mercy will receive mercy.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, seeing that he has done some little good, and repenting of his sins, he prays humbly but confidently for deliverance from his enemies, who are also, because of their malice, the enemies of the Lord.

The appropriateness of this psalm to those whom our human conception represents to us as lying on a bed of torment is evident. They find no consolation except in the thought of God's mercy, forgive-

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<sup>9</sup>. Cf. St. Augustine's prayer for his mother (*Conf.* ix, 35). “I know that she dealt mercifully, and from her heart forgave her debtors their debts . . . . Forgive her, Lord, forgive, I beseech Thee . . . . Thou hast promised mercy unto the merciful . . . .”



ness, and championship. Speaking in their name, we pray that God may take account for them of the merits of Our Lord's passion : He who above all others understood *concerning the needy and the poor* ; of their own goodness to others in life ; and of the acts of mercy we now do for them.

All the tenses may be understood of the present state of the sick man. *Thou hast turned all his couch* means : "Thou changest his bed of sickness into a bed of convalescence, or health" (Boylan).—In v.5, the enemies say to one another : *When shall he die* etc., that is they hope for his speedy death.—In v.6 *if he came in* refers to a visitor who comes in out of mere curiosity, and with malice in his heart.—In v.9 the *unjust word* that these malevolent people say is : "Surely the sick man will not rise from his bed again" (Boylan).—The *man of my peace* is a Hebrew idiom for *my most intimate friend*. This verse is quoted by our Lord of Judas (John xiii, 18).—*Hath greatly supplanted me* : has used great treachery against me.

### Psalm 41.

This psalm, under the antiphon *My soul hath thirsted after the living God : when shall I come and appear before the face of the Lord*, expresses a well-nigh unendurable, protracted longing. It is literally the lament of an Israelite in exile, yearning for the presence of God and the joy and splendour of His

worship. Vv. 4 and 5 may be read as referring to happy memories. While he is thus suffering loneliness and longing, his enemies mock, and ask where his God is. But he keeps his hope and trust in the Lord.

The application of all this to the Holy Souls is immediate, as is evident from some sentences in Dr. Boylan's commentary: "The poet is far from the Temple and its worship . . . His enemies mock him because he . . . seems to have no God . . . He has indeed no solemn worship of the Lord in the lonely place of his sojourn, but he sings in the night-time the praises of Israel's God. 'Be not sad, my soul', he concludes, 'Once again I shall praise the Lord before His face in the Temple and say to Him: "Thou art my helper and my God." "' This certain hope enables the Holy Souls to endure the fierce suffering,—longing for God and purifying pain,—which floods them wave upon wave. They remember God's mercies in the day of life, and sing His praises in their night.

Vv. 4 and 5 are an example of the fulness of meaning allowed by the timeless Hebrew tenses. Dr. Boylan's translation, with the verbs in the past, make us understand the distress of the Israelite exile: "On this I think, And pour out my soul—How I journeyed to the place of the wondrous Tabernacle,—To the House of God, Midst resounding song of praise and thanksgiving—The jubilee of festival!" The future tense of the Vulgate Latin is specially suitable to the state of the Holy Souls, who

look forward to the joy of God's worship in heaven; and to our own state on earth.—The *salvation of my countenance* means 'my rescuing God', *my countenance* being a periphrase for 'me'.—The place of the psalmist's exile is a little hill of the Hermon range, near the source of the river Jordan. "Here, near its rise, the Jordan rushes down through a series of cataracts which, perhaps, suggested the imagery" of waters in the next verses (Boylan). Roaring torrents and wild billows express God's resistless power, causing fear and distress of soul, as in Pss. 87 and 92. Jonas (chap. ii, 4) says "All Thy billows and Thy waves have passed over me."—*Bones broken* are a still stronger image which occurs also in Ps. 6 and in the Miserere.

### (3) LAUDS

#### Antiphons at Lauds.

The antiphons at Lauds proceed in a sort of upward movement from the explicit acknowledgment of God's irresistible domination (Ps. 64, *To Thee all flesh shall come*), coupled with humble repentance and hope (Ps. 50, *The bones that have been humbled shall rejoice*);<sup>10</sup> through gratitude (Ps. 62, *Thy right hand hath received me*), to praise (Ps. 150, *Let every spirit praise the Lord*). In the antiphon to the Canticle, we pray directly on behalf of

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<sup>10</sup>. This psalm, because of these words, was used from the earliest times at funeral processions. See *The Sacramentary*, I, p. 206.

the Holy Souls : *From the gate of hell deliver my soul, O Lord*;—in the Dominican Breviary this becomes *deliver their souls*. The praise of Lauds, as always, reaches its climax in the Benedictus ; and in the antiphon the divine Visitor who has come from on high to *enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death* makes the glorious promise : *I am the Resurrection and the Life : he that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live*.

*Psalm 50.*

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The Miserere, under the antiphon *The bones that have been humbled shall rejoice in the Lord*, expresses the confident hope that accompanies humble repentance. This psalm is a cry of personal sorrow—easily adapted to others' use—on the part of David, whom the prophet Nathan had reproached with a grievous sin (II Kings xii). He confesses his sin (vv. 4,5), implores forgiveness (vv. 1, 2, 15), ever greater purification and resulting joy of spirit (vv. 3, 8, 9, 10, 11). He pleads that his nature is weak (v.6), but that God has revealed to him the truth of His law and purity of heart. He beseeches God not to abandon Him (v.12), to strengthen him (v.13) so that he may convert others by the story of such mercy ; to accept his broken-hearted contrition (vv. 17, 18), so that his ritual sacrifices may be acceptable (vv. 19, 20).

The immediate application of this to the Holy Souls is evident. Their sense of sin, confession of guilt, sorrow, longing for ever greater purification, utter dependence on God and desire of His glory,

are far keener than anything we can feel on earth.

V.5, *that Thou mayest be justified*. . . .  
*mayest overcome*. . . . means that the psalmist is confessing his sin in order that the justice of God's sentence against him may be evident to all.—*For behold, Thou hast loved truth* etc., may be linked up with the following verse: "Thou who lovest truth and makest known to me the depths of Thy wisdom, do Thou purify me, etc." (Boylan).—*Uncertain and hidden things* are uncertain only to us, until God reveals them. The sense is 'hidden and secret things'.—Hyssop was a plant of which twigs were used in ceremonial sprinkling, in ritual purification, and for instance when the door-posts were sprinkled with the blood of the Paschal Lamb. A bit of hyssop (St. John xix, 29) was used to hold the sponge full of vinegar offered to Our Lord just before He died.—V.11, *within my bowels*, in my inmost being.—V.13, *a perfect spirit* is a noble and willing spirit.—V.15, David had brought about the death of Urias the Hethite.—Vv. 19 and 20 are a later addition to the Davidic psalm of personal repentance. The Jews had been led into captivity and Jerusalem had been destroyed. When it is restored, the *sacrifice of justice*, that is, due sacrifices of every kind, will be offered again.

#### *Psalm 64.*

This psalm, under the antiphon *Hear my prayer*,



*O Lord, to Thee all flesh shall come*, recognises God's dominion and the certainty that every human being will fall into His hands. It begins on a note of acknowledgement of guilt and of reparation (vv. 1-3), passes on to the blessings granted to those whom God has taken into His friendship, to His giving of the good things of earth, to His sending the beneficent spring rains and making the land fruitful.

From the earliest times this psalm was applied to the dead. It supplies the Introit to the Mass for the Dead. They acknowledge their former sins. They owe reparation and are fallen into the hands of God. But they are in a special sense blessed, having been chosen by God and taken to Himself, though still dwelling in His outer courts. He, the hope of the ends of the earth, is their powerful hope; and they look forward to His refreshment in the eternal spring-time of Heaven.

*A hymn*, a song of praise.—The *vow* is a service of thanksgiving in the Temple.—*The words of the wicked* mean every evil suggestion to which they have yielded.—*He whom Thou hast chosen*, Thy friend.—*Thy courts*, literally the Temple courts.—The *Gentiles*, all the nations of the world.—The *outgoings of the morning*, that is the sunrise, the Eastern world; the evening, the West.—*Thou hast visited the earth*: looked favourably on it, as in Ps. 8.—The *river of God* is the fertilising rain: "The Arabs call the rain God's river" (Boylan).—*Their food* is the food of the people.



—In *multiply its fruit, it shall spring up*, it is the soil of Palestine.—*Thou shalt bless the crown* etc.: Thou shalt bless the whole circling year.—Beautiful stretches of rich pasture will appear in the desert places after the rains, the hills will be decked with flowers, the rams will have thick fleeces, the valleys will abound with corn, and hill and valley will as it were sing God's praise.

*Psalm 62.*

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This psalm, under the antiphon *Thy right hand hath received me, O Lord*, expresses long drawn-out desire, which would have fainted and failed but for God's supporting hand. From the earliest dawn the psalmist looks out for God, in all desolation he takes refuge in God's power and glory; he will continue to praise Him and hope in Him, to take shelter under His wings, to believe in the final discomfiture of his foes, to be faithful to God. The possession of God is the best of all blessings.

The Holy Souls are still exiles from God, in a mysterious desert land of suffering. They long, they thirst painfully for God, and for heaven His sanctuary. God's hand, which upheld them in life, still upholds them in patient hope; and one day their enemies will be vanquished.

Literally this psalm may have been composed by David when he was obliged to fly through the desert from the revolt of Absalom. But the world is a desert to one who longs for God, who alone can satisfy his soul and his

every craving for happiness.—*Lives* is a Hebrew plural for 'life'.—*Marrow and fatness* stand for the fullest spiritual satisfaction, greater than the satisfaction of rich sacrificial banquets. — *In matutinis*, in the night-watches, the early morning of the new day.—*They have sought my soul in vain* refers literally to the psalmist's enemies, who will fall on the battlefield and go down to the underworld, their bodies devoured by jackals; spiritually to all the enemies of our souls.—Our king, Christ, rejoices in God, and we are saved by fidelity to Him.

### *Psalm 150.*

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The last psalm of Lauds, under the antiphon *Let every spirit praise the Lord*, is, as always at Lauds, a song of pure praise. It is the last and the most purely jubilant of the *Little Hallel* of which we had the first at Vespers.

On the lips (through us, their spokesmen) of the Holy Souls it expresses complete joy in self-surrender to God's will; more than that, gratitude for their purifying sufferings. "Yes, let every spirit that has had the happiness to leave this life in grace, praise the Lord in that dark prison, and wait patiently for the moment at which they will be allowed to join in the blissful *Alleluia* of the angels and saints, praising God upon the harp" (Wolter).

The use of musical instruments with song and dance was characteristic of high festivals

in the Jewish Temple.—In *His holy places*,  
His dwelling in heaven, above the firmament.  
—*Every spirit*, “everything that has the breath  
of life”, for this is “the Alleluia of all cre-  
ation” (Boylan).

## V.

### THE CANTICLES

The two Gospel Canticles, the Magnificat and the Benedictus, are used in thanksgiving and praise, at Vespers and Lauds, as in the Divine Office and the Little Office of Our Lady. The antiphons in each case supply a special reason for fervent gratitude and jubilant praise. At Vespers it is the divine promise, soon to be fully realised for those in Purgatory, *All that the Father giveth to Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will not cast out*; or as in the Dominican Breviary, the words heard by St. John which the Roman Office uses as a versicle : *I heard a voice from heaven saying to me : Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord*. At Lauds, it is the assurance and the hope, the ultimate realisation for each separate human soul of the redemption of God's people : *I am the Resurrection and the Life . . . everyone that liveth and believeth in Me shall not die for ever*.

The Canticle of Ezechias is taken from chap. xxxviii of Isaïas. There, as also in the fourth Book of Kings, we are told that the good king Ezechias fell into a deadly sickness ; that he prayed in anguish to God to spare him an untimely death, and that he

was granted fifteen added years of life.<sup>1</sup> The Cantic is his hymn of praise to God for this favour. It describes (vv. 1-5) his terrible distress at the prospect of death; (vv. 6-9) his extreme suffering; (vv. 10-11) his submission, his prayer, God's mercy, his recovered peace; (v. 12) his deliverance; and (vv. 13-15) his joy and lasting gratitude.

The terror of death, the stark physical pain, the moaning and weeping, suggest the acute sufferings of the Holy Souls; v.11 conveys their submission and peace even in utmost bitterness. They have amidst the dangers of earth escaped the eternal death of the soul. Their sins have been forgiven and they look forward with sure and certain hope to the time when they will sing psalms of joy in the house of the Lord.

The general sense of this Cantic is clear; but there are difficulties of interpretation and obscure passages. To use it as a prayer, we read it in the light of Christian revelation: as we shall see in studying the Lessons there are things in the old Hebrew conception of the value of life, in their dread of death, in their view of suffering as a punishment, which can hold for us a higher spiritual meaning. In v.1, *I said, I sought*, tell us what passed through the king's mind at the time.—*The gates of Hell*, hell itself: the *gates* often stood for the city, being a gathering-place and strongly defended.—*Hell* is the Hebrew Sheol. We had

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<sup>1</sup> We read this passage as the Epistle of the Mass on the Thursday after Ash Wednesday.

the same conception in Psalm 6 and shall find it expressed at length in the Lessons from Job.—In v.2, *I sought*, feeling that I was deprived of *the residue of my years*, the time that I might normally have expected to live.—*The land of the living*, literally this earth, where he could still worship God in the Temple.—*The inhabitant of my rest* is difficult; a better reading gives *the inhabitants of the world*.—Death is described with two very poetic metaphors: the folding away of a shepherd's tent, and the end of a piece of weaving.—*Between morning and night* because of the torment of the day; while *I hoped until the morning* indicates a sleepless night.—*Broken bones* is a metaphor for a body racked with pain.—The sick man cries like a swallow, and moans like a dove; and his eyes are dim with tears. We may also remember, when we read *my eyes are weakened looking upwards*, that St. Paul speaks (I Tim. vi, 16) of the *light inaccessible* in which God dwells. The suffering souls “with eyes still dim from the dust of this world, are too weak to be able to gaze like the eagle on that dazzling brightness.”<sup>2</sup> In v.9, in one breath he cannot endure his suffering and appeals to God against it; in the next he recognises that God Himself is the author of His suffering.—*Thou shalt chastise me and make me to live* expresses submission.—*In peace is my bitterness most bitter*: Bellarmine, quoted

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<sup>2</sup>. The Sacramentary, V, p. 220.



by Bishop Keppler (p. 74) writes : "Since the Church teaches that the souls of the faithful are resting in peace . . . we must believe that they enjoy unspeakable bliss in the midst of their torments, on account of the certain hope they have of salvation." *Justice and peace have kissed* (Ps. 84).—V.12, he is delivered and his sins are forgiven : the Hebrews regarded suffering as a punishment for sin, not necessarily grave sins but even those of ignorance and negligence, *delicta* as in Psalm 18. This thought, which is also in Job, is peculiarly applicable to the Holy Souls.—*Hell, the pit, Sheol*.—*Shall not look for Thy truth* : God's truth is fidelity to His promises. They conceived that there was no hope in Sheol. We can apply the words to the hell of Christian revelation, and see in them a thanksgiving on the part of the Holy Souls.

## VI.

### THE LESSONS

The nine Lessons at Matins are taken from the book of Job. In using these and other parts of the Old Testament, the Church adapts them to her purpose of prayer. The writers of the inspired books of old were wiser than they knew, and wonderful spiritual applications reveal themselves in the light of Christian revelation. To perceive these however it is a practical necessity first to understand the origin and the literal sense of the venerable words we use.

The book of Job is a didactic poem in dramatic form. It treats through a concrete case the grievous problem of God's apparent injustice in allowing the good to suffer and the wicked to prosper. A prologue prepares us for Job's terrible trial, an epilogue tells of his restored prosperity which is the reward of his final submission to God : *I know that Thou canst do all things, and no thought is hid from Thee . . . . I have spoken unwisely, and things that above measure exceeded my knowledge . . . . Therefore I reprehend myself, and do penance in dust and ashes.* The actual drama is a series of discussions. Job's friends come to visit him and in-

sist that he must have offended God : the Jews, even down to the time of Christ, looked on suffering as the direct punishment for sin. He protests his innocence. No doubt he has committed slight sins in his youth and his ignorances ; but there seems no proportion between them and his present misery, with the immediate prospect of death and Sheol.

The ancient Hebrews had not yet the full revelation of the world to come, of reward and punishment beyond the grave. They thought of all men as going to the place called Sheol—misleadingly translated by *hell*. Their Sheol had some resemblance to the Greek Hades, the Roman infernal regions, the Babylonian underworld.<sup>1</sup> It was a hollow place in the centre of the earth, where the spirits endured for ever a sort of shadow-life, the negation of all the joys and activities of earth. There was no worship of God there. There was day and night, but the day of Sheol was all gloom. Along with the Canticle of Ezechias, chaps. iii & x of Job, chap. ix of Ecclesiasticus, Psalms 87, 114, 17, 55, and many shorter passages throw light on this idea of Sheol.

The Lessons in the Office of the Dead are taken from Job's replies to his friends. He protests against their unjust charges, finds them troublesome comforters, begs for their pity. He appeals against them to God Himself. He cries out in the intensity of his torment, with the violent and rapidly changing imagery of Hebrew poetry, and with stark realism of detail. He cries out as a man conscious of

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<sup>1</sup> See Kissane, *The Book of Job*, p. 61.

no grave sin, but only of human weakness; cruelly tried and not understanding why; using language that is vehement, tumultuous, intemperate, even audacious. He pleads desperately in his anguish. Then he falls back on submission and trust. How all this can suggest the extreme suffering of Purgatory and adapt itself to the state of the Holy Souls is easy to see. That too is a dark land where horror dwells. They are innocent, that is like Job, not guilty of grave sin, for if they have ever committed it, it has been forgiven. God's hand is heavy on them as on Job, and like him they appeal to the pity of their friends. Job passes from despondency, almost rebellion, to submission and trust. The Holy Souls suffer and trust at the same time, but our human modes of expression of these two states must of necessity alternate. Their sufferings are intense, yet like Job they are the friends of God. Life and mercy He has granted them and His visitation still preserves their spirit. A visitation of pain, it is true; for suffering must be endured in this life or the next to atone for sin, "a suffering we take up with shame as men who in the sight of heaven have wrought mischief against God and disfigured His image in their own souls."<sup>2</sup> This shame and pain, coupled with an eager readiness to bear it, make of certain verses not so much a plaint, as a thanksgiving and a longing for the purifying knowledge and the endurance of exile. The note of submission and pleading is very evident in the Lessons of the second Nocturn, where it corresponds to the tone

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<sup>2</sup> McLaughlin, *Purgatory or the Church Suffering*. p. 86.

of the psalms : in Lesson 4, *Make me know my crimes and offences ; why hidest Thou Thy face ?* In Lesson 5, *Who can make him clean that is conceived of unclean seed ? Is it not Thou who only art ? . . . Depart a little from him that he may rest<sup>3</sup> until his wished-for day come.* In Lesson 6, *Who will grant me this that Thou mayst protect me in hell ?* All the days in which the Holy Souls are now in warfare, they wait patiently for their *change*, their release, in the sure and certain hope of the vision of God.

Lesson I. Job vii, 16-21.

Job feels that his days are numbered. He is but a frail mortal man, too miserable to be worth God's scrutiny and relentless pursuit. Yet God's hand is heavy on him even from the dawn, and gives him no least moment of respite. Even if he has sinned, why does not God forgive and have mercy for the brief space of life that remains ? He will soon be in the dust.

*That thou shouldst magnify him* conveys exactly the opposite idea here to that expressed in Ps.8, where God is glorified for making much of man.—*Settest Thy heart upon him*, in anger.—*How long* will this last ?—*To swallow down my spittle*, just as we speak in current language of not having time to breathe.—*What shall I do to Thee* : how could I injure Thee ?—*Opposite to Thee* : as a mark for Thy arrows.

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3. Cf. Gerontius : "Motionless and happy in my pain  
Lone not forlorn . . . "

Lesson II. Job x, 1-7.

Job protests in the bitterness of his soul that he is unjustly afflicted, though innocent. Is God like a man, unjust, capricious, fallible, tyrannical? Is He not eternal, and can He not therefore be more patient and merciful than a mere earthly tyrant who punishes small offences? Is God taking advantage of His might?

*Against myself*: he is so weary of life that he is ready to say anything and to face any extra risk.—*That Thou shouldst calumniate me*: *calumnia* is a false accusation; this would be unjust.—*Oppress me the work of Thy own hands and help the counsel of the wicked*: this would be capricious.—*To see as man seeth* would be to be fallible.

Lesson III, Job x, 8-12.

Or does God take wanton delight in destroying His own handiwork? He has not only lavished His care on the body, but shown mercy and constant protection to the soul.

Job, using the frequent figure of the potter speaks of his body as formed of clay, by God. He goes on to describe the marvel of the formation of the body, from the moment of conception. "The foetus is conceived as first in a fluid state, then coagulated, then it receives a covering of skin and flesh, and a framework of bones and sinews."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Book of Job, p. 59.



Lesson IV, Job xiii, 22-28.

Job asks at least to be heard as by a judge, and to be told what his offences are. He pleads again that he is too insignificant to deserve God's displeasure and His close attention : he is but a leaf, a straw, rotting matter, a perishable garment. Yet God watches his every step and records his least sins.

V.23 : how many sins, and their nature.—*To hide the face* : to show displeasure.—*Thou writest bitter things against me* : the metaphor of God's writing is frequent. For example in Psalmi 138, *In Thy book all shall be written* ; and in Apoc. xx, 12 : *the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books according to their works*. The *Dies irae* says, *Liber scriptus proferetur*.—*The stocks* : a punishment.

Lesson V, Job xiv, 1-6.

Job repeats his plea, in still more pathetic terms : urging against God's avenging scrutiny the frailty of his humanity and the shortness of life's span. He begs for a short interval of rest from suffering before death.

*To bring him into judgment with Thee*, to try him for his sins.—*Thou hast appointed his bounds* : fixed the time of his death, which Job, so great is his suffering, calls the *wished for day*.—*The hireling*, as in chap. vii. of Job : *The life of man on earth is a warfare, and his days are like the days of a hireling*.

Lesson VI, Job xiv, 13-16.

If only the sojourn in Sheol could be temporary, Job would be there sheltered until God's anger had passed away, until the appointed time at which He should remember His creature in friendship. There he would wait patiently for his release.

This passage is difficult. What is on Job's lips an unattainable wish is expressed definitely in the future. But the words thus become more applicable to Purgatory : *All the days in which I am now in warfare*,—that is, in painful enforced bond-service,—*I expect*, that is, I wait, *until my change*, that is, my release, *shall come*.

Lesson VII, Job xvii, 1-3 and 11-15.

In his extreme wretchedness Job appeals to God against the calumnies of his friends. But as apparently God has decreed to leave him in his misery, he sees himself doomed. He must endure his suffering. His soul will go to Sheol, and his body to the corruption of the grave; so where is there any hope?

This lesson consists of vv. 1-3 and 11-15 of chapter xvii. *Spirit* : the breath of life which leaves the body at death.—*My eye abideth in bitterness* : v.7 of the same chapter runs, *my eye is dim through indignation*.—*Set me beside Thee* : Job will fear no man if God is his champion.—*My thoughts are dissipated* : there is an end of my plans and hopes.—One of Job's

friends, Sophar, has said to him (chap. xi, vv. 14 and 17): *If thou wilt put away from thee the iniquity that is in thy hand. . . . brightness like that of the noon-day shall arise to thee at evening; and when thou shalt think thyself consumed, thou shalt rise as the day-star*; and to this, which he is refuting, Job is perhaps alluding in *They have turned night into day, etc.*—*Hell is my house*: my soul is doomed to Sheol.—In the Dominican Breviary, the last question is answered with words not in the text of Job: *Thou art, my God*. The Liturgy thus makes explicit what was implicit in the sacred text of the Old Testament. Another example of such an adaptation of the text to the purposes of the Liturgy is found in the *Benedicite* at Lauds of the Divine Office, where the second last verse: *Let us bless the Father and the Son with the Holy Ghost* is inserted by the Church.

Lesson VIII, Job xix, 20-27.

Job's terrible condition makes him cry out for the pity of his friends. He cannot understand why they are cruel enough to add their persecution to the heavy suffering inflicted on him by God. He appeals from them to one, that is to God Himself, who after his death will defend him and establish his innocence. This is his invincible hope.

*The flesh being consumed: rotted away.—  
The hand of the Lord hath touched Job; why*

do his friends also persecute him? They are as it were ravenous beasts, devouring their victim.—He wishes that his words could be recorded in a book, or on a leaden tablet, or in stone, to assert his innocence when he is no more.—He is certain that he will have a Defender. In Hebrew usage, the *go'el*, or *defender*, was the next of kin, obliged to redeem a kinsman from bondage or debt and to avenge his death. Psalm 18 ends with this word : *O Lord, my Helper and my Redeemer* ; and it is frequently used of God in Isaias, for instance (chap. xliii, 14) : *Thus saith the Lord your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel*.—The text of the Vulgate Latin is an explicit and jubilant statement of belief in the resurrection of the body : *I know that my Redeemer liveth and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth, And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God, Whom I myself shall see and my eyes shall behold*. It also expresses the confident expectation of the vision of God which consoles the Souls in Purgatory. It is used as a responsory at Matins.

Lesson IX,<sup>5</sup> Job x, 18-22.

Job's misery is so great that it were better for him to have died unborn. As it is, death is coming swiftly. He begs God for a short respite, before

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<sup>5</sup>. In the Cistercian Office, Lesson IX is taken from II Mach., chap. xii.

he goes to the gloom of Sheol, never to return.

*Suffer me* : give me a little respite. The same idea is expressed in the last verse of Psalm 38 : *Forgive me that I may be refreshed, before I go hence, and be no more.* In both passages death is represented as the end of earthly life and joys.—*The dark land* of Sheol is represented in all its gloom.—*The shadow of death and no order* : “There is nothing to correspond to the moon and the stars of the earthly night.”<sup>6</sup>

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6. *The Book of Job*, p. 61.

## VII.

### THE VERSICLES, RESPONSORIES AND PRAYERS.

The versicles and responsories gather up into concise and impressive words the fruit of our reflections on the state of the dead. They are acts of faith and hope, or pathetic appeals for mercy. Full as we are of the solemn thoughts roused by the psalms and lessons, we can hardly fail to recite them with a sort of burning conviction and desire.

Some of them are taken directly from Scripture : from Job, the Apocalypse, and psalms<sup>1</sup> not otherwise included in the Office. For others, the Church has drawn on her traditional and creative devotion.

The familiar versicle *Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine* with its response is very ancient. References to refreshment, light, and peace are frequent in the earliest inscriptions in the Catacombs. The actual words come from the apocryphal fourth book of Esdras<sup>2</sup> (ii, 34, 35) : "Wait for your shepherd, he will give you rest for eternity, and perpetual light will shine upon you through eternity of time." The beatific life is called eternal rest, writes Cardinal

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<sup>1</sup> *Collocet eos Dominus*, Ps. 112; *In memoria aeterna*, Ps. 111; *Ne tradas bestiis*, Ps. 73.

<sup>2</sup> This book is also the source of the jubilant Introit for Whit Tuesday; and of one of the most beautiful pages in the Liturgy, the Improperia (Reproaches) sung during Adoration of the Cross on Good Friday. It was composed, says Dom



Schuster,<sup>3</sup> “not. . . . as though the activities of the soul ceased after death, but because the labours of this life being ended, the soul aspires and unites itself to God, without any effort but with incomprehensible joy.”

The versicle *A porta inferi* is a petition—such as we also have in the Tract and Offertory of the Mass for the Dead—which seems to have passed into its present use from the prayers for the dying.<sup>4</sup> In part, these petitions may be understood figuratively, of Purgatory: *inferus* and *infernus* mean the underworld; but the Church’s prayer is timeless here, because there is no time with God; who knows and hears our petitions even before they are uttered, in His eternal *now*. In many prayers for the dead the Liturgy “refers to the supreme moment of the individual judgment of the soul, the moment in which its fate is decided for all eternity. The prayers of the Church follow the body to the grave, but God, with whom there is neither past nor future, has already beheld the mediation of the Church whose

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Cabrol (*Livre de la prière antique*, p. 295, note), about the 3rd century, and lost its authority towards the end of the 4th, so that borrowing from it is probably earlier. Other scholars date its composition about A.D. 97.

<sup>3</sup> *The Sacramentary*, V, p. 236.

<sup>4</sup> There is preserved an *Ordo commendationis animae* of between 250 and 300 A.D. It is strangely impressive to find still used, word for word, in the Recommendation of a Departing Soul, the third century appeals to God to have mercy on the dying person, as He had mercy of old on those who trusted Him: from Noah down to Daniel and Susanna. These invocations link up with Jewish liturgies. The mention of SS. Peter, Paul, and Thecla (reputed to have been a convert of St. Paul) recall the earliest Christian times.

suffrage has a powerful influence on the divine judgment. Her prayers are those of a Spouse and a Mother, and the heart of the Father of all men cannot be deaf to them."<sup>5</sup>

In this sense we must understand, for example, the piteous petitions of the *Dies irae*; the *Peccantem me quotidie* :

Sinning daily and not repenting, the fear of death troubles me; because in hell there is no redemption. Have mercy on me, O God, and save me. O God, in Thy name save me, and in Thy strength deliver me. Because in hell there is no redemption;

perhaps also the responsory used after the 9th lesson at Matins when the Office is of one nocturn, *Libera me Domine de viis inferni* :<sup>6</sup>

Deliver me, O Lord, from the ways of hell, Thou who didst break the brazen gates, and didst visit hell, and didst give light to them that they might behold Thee, who were in the pains of darkness. Crying and saying : Thou art come, O our Redeemer Who were in the pains of darkness.

Fear of the Judgment runs through many of these prayers like a recurring motif. This is a medieval characteristic, and gives some indication of their date. The text of Sophonias (i, 15, 16) *That day is a day of wrath, a day of tribulation and distress,*

<sup>5</sup>. *The Sacramentary*, V, p. 222. See also Cath. Encyl. Art. *Requiem*.

<sup>6</sup>. This very ancient composition is one of the few texts in the Roman Liturgy alluding to Christ's descent into hell. It is not used in the Dominican Rite.

*a day of calamity and misery, a day of darkness and obscurity, . . . a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities . . .* had been worked into a poem on the Judgment in the 10th century<sup>7</sup> long before our *Dies irae*, attributed to Thomas of Celano about 1250. And when the great cathedrals came to be built, the scenes of the Last Day were often carved with intense realism over their doors. In a manuscript of the 10th century is found the poignant *Hei mihi Domine* :

Woe is me, O Lord, because I have sinned exceedingly in my life. O wretch, what shall I do? whither shall I fly but to Thee, my God? Have mercy on me when Thou comest at the latter day. My soul is greatly troubled; but Thou, O Lord, succour it. Have mercy on me when Thou comest at the latter day;

and the responsory made familiar by its use in the Absolution after a solemn Requiem Mass, *Libera me Domine de morte aeterna*. This was formerly much longer, worked out almost into a poem of great pathos. The form now used in the Dominican Breviary has a moving supplication not contained in the Roman :

O God, the Creator of all things, who didst fashion me out of the slime of the earth, and didst wonderfully redeem me with Thine own blood, and wilt cause my body, although it now decayeth, to rise again at the day of judgment from the tomb : hear me, O hear me,

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<sup>7</sup>. Cath. Encycl. Art. *Dies irae*.

and command that my soul be placed in the bosom of Abraham Thy patriarch.

The prayers are typical collects, full of meaning in their brevity. To read them carefully is to get a sense of the endless adaptibility of the Liturgy, and a real insight into our faith about the dead. Some, by their tone, are very ancient; for example, *Deus cui proprium* :

O God, whose property it is ever to have mercy and to spare, we make humble supplication to Thee on behalf of the soul of Thy servant . . . . cast not that soul into the hands of the enemy, nor be for ever forgetful of it, but bid thy holy angels welcome it into heaven, its true fatherland; that because it has believed and hoped in Thee, it may not suffer the pains of hell, but possess eternal joys.

In the ordinary Office of the Dead throughout the year, the Roman Breviary<sup>8</sup> uses three prayers: one for bishops and priests, put first because of their dignity and responsibility; the second for brethren, relatives and benefactors; and third the familiar prayer for all the faithful departed. "This very ancient Collect is a little masterpiece and contains a complete spiritual treatise", writes Cardinal Schuster.<sup>9</sup> "First, the motive is set forth why God is so good to us, and this is because He is our Creator. We are the work of His hands, and more than this, we are also the fruit of His Passion, the

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<sup>8</sup>. With which the Monastic Breviary coincides. In the Cistercian, the first prayer is for many persons deceased.

<sup>9</sup>. *The Sacramentary*, V, p. 221.

property bought or rather redeemed by His Blood. Next, the Collect alludes to the Communion of Saints which unites the Church militant and suppliant to the Church suffering and expiating in Purgatory. Further, the special reason which draws down the divine mercy on the souls in Purgatory is—even more than our intercession—the hope they place in God. Both during life and in death they have hoped and trusted, not in their own justice, but in his mercy. As the Apostle says : *spes non confundit*<sup>10</sup>, for God never denies us those things for which His grace has led us to hope.”

The Dominican Rite has a somewhat more intimate and so to say domestic touch. The third prayer is that for all the faithful departed. The first is for brethren,—sisters being specially mentioned,—for benefactors, and for *familiares*, that is for all who have any close connection with the Order. The second, too little known; is the singularly beautiful prayer for fathers and mothers.<sup>11</sup> It seems due and fitting that those to whom we owe our very existence, and those especially who give their children, often at their own great human cost, to recruit the army of God’s consecrated servants, should get a perpetual remembrance. And for ourselves, when we pray : *bring us to see them in the joy of eternal brightness*, it is a direct corroboration of our hope of meeting those we love again in heaven.

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<sup>10</sup>. Hope confoundeth not. (St. Paul, Romans, v.)

<sup>11</sup>. O God, who hast commanded us to honour our father and mother, in Thy loving kindness have mercy on the souls of our parents, forgive them their sins, and bring us to see them in the joy of eternal brightness.



## VIII.

### CONCLUSION

The first and immediate reason for trying to grasp the meaning and appreciate the beauty of the Office of the Dead is that we may recite it devoutly, and so help the suffering souls. But that is not the only result of busying ourselves with all that it implies. "He that recites these prayers", says a German commentator,<sup>1</sup> "becomes imbued also with the same holy sentiments with which the Poor Souls are filled since their departure from this world until their entrance into heaven." And Bishop Keppler writes:<sup>2</sup> "By the faith in Purgatory our life's sphere is enriched and our horizon is widened beyond the limits of this world, and it is absurd to fear that a melancholy saddening of life's views and a weakening of life's energies might be the consequence of a too close intimacy with the dead. The contrary is true." That is of course the true Christian idea, which we meet from the beginning. Or perhaps we should say, especially in the beginning, when the heroic Christian faith was tempered in adversity. St. Cyprian—he was martyred in 258—expressed it vividly apropos of a pestilence that was devastating many of the Roman provinces. He felt himself commanded to declare "diligently" and

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<sup>1</sup>. Quoted by Keppler, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup>. P. 158.



“publicly” that “our brethren who are freed from this world by the Lord’s summons are not to be lamented, since we know that they are not lost, but sent before; that, departing from us, they precede us as travellers, as navigators are accustomed to do . . . that the black garments should not be taken upon us here, when they have already taken upon them white raiment there; that occasion should not be given to the Gentiles for them deservedly and rightly to reprehend us, that we mourn for those who, we say, are alive with God, as if they were extinct and lost.”—“And this, as it ought always to be done by God’s servants, much more ought to be done now,—now that the world is collapsing and is oppressed with the tempests of mischievous ills.”—“Let us greet the day which assigns each of us to his own house . . . and restores us to Paradise and the Kingdom of Heaven . . . there a great number of our dear ones is awaiting us, and a dense crowd of parents, brothers, children, is longing for us, already assured of their own safety, and still solicitous for our salvation. . . . There the glorious company of the Apostles, there the host of the rejoicing Prophets, there the innumerable multitude of Martyrs. . . . there the triumphant Virgins. . . . there are merciful men rewarded who by feeding and helping the poor have done the work of righteousness; who, keeping the Lord’s precepts, have transferred their earthly patrimonies to the heavenly treasures. To these, beloved brethren, let us hasten with an eager desire. . . . may the Lord Christ look upon the purpose of our

mind and faith, He who will give the larger reward of His glory to those whose desires in respect of Himself were greater."<sup>3</sup>

Another result is that we now have an additional incentive to study and love the liturgy of the Church's year. It "furnishes numerous opportunities . . . for dividing with them [the Holy Souls] the fruits and graces of the ecclesiastical year, which they undoubtedly celebrate in their own way in Purgatory. . . . although they cannot draw directly from its fountains nor enjoy its fruits."<sup>4</sup> The same idea is developed by a writer already several times quoted, who sums up in one book all that is most enlightening, consoling, and uplifting in the doctrine of Purgatory. Some sentences from the beautiful last pages in which he speaks of the celebration of the Church's year beyond the grave may well serve to round off our study of the Office of the Dead.

"It is against our principles to indulge the imagination—the dogma of Purgatory is far too serious and important for that; but the idea that the whole invisible world, in so far as it is peopled by the children of the kingdom of heaven, joins in the celebration of the festivals which the Church of this world observes in honour of Christ, its Head and its Saviour, rests on such solid ground that it cannot simply be brushed aside. Now all our festivals are fes-

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<sup>3</sup>. Cyprian, *De mortalitate*, pp. 464, 467, 468. Ante-Nicene Library, Vol. VIII.

<sup>4</sup>. Keppler, p. 114.

tivals of grace, and where grace illumines a soul, joy also bursts forth, irrespectively of the point that it may have reached on the road to salvation. The Souls in Purgatory are far nearer to the goal than we are. . . . They can have no better occasion for rejoicing than the great festivals by which the Church honours the chief incidents in the work of our salvation. Thus is it brought home to all Christendom what it owes to its Saviour. And the theme of its song of victory is suggested by St. Paul when he says: 'I know whom I have believed.' . . . '*Spe salvi facti sumus*—we are saved by hope' is Purgatory's watchword. This hope is the real life of Purgatory, that is, the real supernatural hope which in this present life all too often exists but precariously inasmuch as it is stifled by its rival—*spes vana*—the vain hope of earthly things which have neither substance nor consistency. In Purgatory all rivalry between these two is at an end. There the soul no longer cherishes many hopes: it retains but one, all the others having forsaken it at its entrance into the next world; the one true hope and expectation of happiness with God: '*Expectantes beatam spem et adventum gloriæ magni Dei et Salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi*—Looking for the blessed hope and the coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.'<sup>5</sup>

These considerations stimulate our own hope.

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5. Bartmann, pp. 239-241.

They may make up to some extent for what Cardinal Schuster deplores, the diminution of the "ancient splendours" of the Church's ritual, which were a source of strength and consolation to our forefathers "in the battle of life and especially in the agony of death."—"With a simplicity and dignity which those of our day find difficult to realize, they passed from the earthly temple and its liturgy to that liturgy which the Lamb of God is for ever celebrating amid the Hosannas of angels and saints on the golden altar of heaven."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *The Sacramentary*, I, p. 208.

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# LABEL YOUR LUGGAGE

BY  
ROBERT NASH, S.J.

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# LABEL YOUR LUGGAGE

## I

It is very important to have it labelled—at all times indeed, but particularly at present. If you entertain any doubts about this, may I ask you to read the screaming notice in the window of the bus office? If even still you cherish any lingering delusions concerning the need of a label, just try what will happen if you attempt to leave your luggage in the cloak-room without one. The attendant will rap out at you: "This bag is not labelled. Labels can be bought at the counter, and write distinctly, *please*." And having unburthened himself, in stentorian tones, of these illuminating statements he pushes your bag back towards you again and proceeds to look after the needs of the next person in the queue.

Well it's fair enough. How can you expect the much-tried man to pick out yours later on if it is not labelled?

At the  
Bus Office

One bus or train has now to do duty for the six or seven of pre-war days, and one result of this drastic curtailment is a big increase in the amount of luggage to be handled, consequent on the increase in the proportionate number of persons travelling. When, a few hours later, you return to the office to claim your bag your friend the porter withdraws into the background to a place littered with what seems to be half the city's luggage. Green bags and brown bags and black bags, bags large and bags small, tennis racquets, bicycles, paper parcels, bundles of newspapers, luckless sickly chickens tied together in pairs, workingmen's tools, boxes marked "with care" or "fragile," cases with the warning "this side up" or "perishable"—this is the conglomeration in the midst of which he picks his steps, your friend the porter, keeping his eye open all the time for the particular piece of property which belongs to *you*.

It's labelled. Yours would be, of course. So he glances from the docket in his hand to the dockets dangling from the various trunks and other oddments on every side. Yours has a distinguishing mark, a seal by which he is enabled to recognise it, and presently his quest is rewarded. You watch him make a jerk forward and pounce upon an object, and sure enough when he drags it forth from its hiding-place into the light of day it proves to be your suitcase, and he dumps it down on the counter before you.

But it is not in the interests of the Company only that you should label your luggage. If at the end of your journey, in the joy and excitement of meeting your friends on the platform, you have the misfortune to mislay or forget that suitcase, what is going to happen to it now? On remembering, your first thought will be: "And it wasn't even labelled!" And with that thought there settles down upon you a sinking feeling, for you know that a lost bag or bicycle without a label stands a very poor chance of finding its way home.

We may very well look upon our own selves as so many pieces of property which are belonging to Jesus Christ. No need, I take it, to stress the truth that we are not mere chattels, for by sanctifying grace we have been actually raised to a state in which we share in the very life of God Himself. God owns us, by every kind of right and title, for God created us, God redeemed us, and God it is Who sustains us in existence from one second to the next. Did He cease to think about us and thus uphold us, we must at that instant lapse into the nothingness from which He drew us forth. And is there any label to be affixed which will at once show this ownership? Is there any seal to be stamped upon us which will prove that we belong to Him? Our Lord compares Himself to a shepherd and us to His sheep, and He adds: "I know Mine, and Mine know Me." But *how* does He know them? What is the sign and the seal? Has He too a label for His property?

Yes He has and He tells us very definitely what it is. I



see Him seated at the Supper Table. He is speaking to the group about Him and I can catch His words quite plainly : "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, *that you have love, one for another.*" So there it is, the mark which characterises property belonging to Him. A true Christian can be picked out by his practical charity, by the love he shows towards his fellow man because that fellow man takes the place of Jesus Christ.

On that same night there leaned against the breast of Our Lord, John the disciple whom Jesus loved. Years later he was to write three wonderful letters, the theme of which would be, in the main, the need of this strong mutual love one for another. "My dearest," he would say, "if God hath so loved us, we ought also to love one another." A conclusion which at first sight seems a little strange. Wouldn't you have expected rather : "My dearest, if God hath so loved us, we ought also to love God ?" But no. With the memory of the Master's parting discourse vividly in his mind John put the conclusion in his own way and knew it was logical.

And when his life was drawing to a close he never tired of repeating to those who came to talk with him : "My little children, love one another." "And why do you always tell us the very same thing ?" they asked, a little weary perhaps from the monotony of the refrain. "Because" he told them, "it was the Master's own special commandment. If it alone be perfectly observed all else will be right." Those were the days when even the pagans were able to read the label. "See," they would exclaim. "See how these Christians love one another."

"Love" is one of the most sadly abused words in the English language. One of the abuses from which it suffers is to confuse it with a mere philanthropy, a mere kindliness and readiness to relieve pain, but whether that pain be found in a man or in a cat or a horse, does not seem to matter so very much. Natural goodwill of this sort is

Love Letters  
Look to  
the Motive

right enough in its way but it is by no means the test of discipleship with Christ. The man who has grasped the import of the great commandment recognises that every human being upon whom his eyes rest takes the place of Jesus Christ, and he loves him and is kind to him, *for that reason*.

It is therefore no real Christian charity to alleviate pain or scatter largesse merely because I have a horror of seeing suffering in man or beast, or merely because I am in the humour to be generous with my money. Such a natural motive is not necessarily excluded but the one Our Lord demands goes much deeper. What is it ?

The answer becomes very evident when you recall that the second reason for labelling your luggage is to guard against loss of your property. Turn now for a moment to the seventh chapter of St. Matthew and you come upon a reference to works which, though good in themselves, were discovered to be devoid of all merit when those who did them arrived at the final stage of their journey. "Many will say to Me in that day" says Our Lord, "'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name and cast out devils in Thy name and done many miracles in Thy name ?' And then I will profess unto them : 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you that work iniquity.'"

Before you close your bible please go on a few pages more and this time open St. Luke at his eighteenth chapter. Here is the account before you of the prayer of the pharisee and the publican. The pharisee proclaimed that he fasted twice in the week and gave tithes of all he possessed. The publican struck his breast and begged for mercy, and he went down to his house justified rather than the other.

Now it was probably quite true that that pharisee did those righteous deeds, and that those condemned in the judgment did cast out devils and work miracles and prophecy. Why then are they rejected ? For no one will deny that it is an excellent thing to fast and to give alms, nor will anyone call in question the value of miracles and the blessings that accrue from them. Yet all these things,

Lost  
Luggage

good in themselves, have gone astray. They are lost luggage, and lost beyond recovering as far as eternal life is concerned. Why? Because they did not bear the stamp upon them. The motive was all wrong. They had no label to prove that they were done for love of Jesus Christ and for the neighbour as taking His place.

Those alms were given merely for show. Those fasts by which the body was starved were made to pander to the appetite of an overbearing and insatiable pride. The miracles were Satan's counterfeit, Beelzebub feigning to cast out Beelzebub but in reality only tightening his grip on the foolish agent whom he had duped. The long prayers rose up from a hypocritical heart. A truly terrifying confirmation this is of St. Paul's teaching: "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor and if I should deliver my body to be burned, *and not have charity*, it profiteth me nothing." It is all lost at the end of the journey.

So kind deeds are not enough, nor are penances enough, nor even miracles. If the label is going to convey all these safely to eternal life they must be done from the right motive. "Let all your things be done in charity." Love is the fulfilling of the law; the twofold love of God and of the neighbour for His sake contains all the law and the prophets. Love for another, therefore, to be genuine, must be the overflow of my love for God. By grace we are all united to Christ and to each other, so as to form together one great organism, the mystical body of Christ. That is why the heart of the true Christian goes out in a sincere love towards everybody, the tinker and tailor and candlestick maker, because (and this is the all-important point), every single individual who crosses his path takes the place of Jesus Christ. He is part of the mystical body and *therefore* to be loved.

"By *this* shall all men know that you are My disciples." A cup of cold water given from this motive merits a reward surpassing great in eternity. A tiny farthing dropped from this motive as temple tribute by a poor widow is beyond

reckoning more pleasing in God's sight than the lavish alms handed out by the pharisees "that they might be seen by men."

You will find still further confirmation of this in Our Lord's account of the last judgment. To the just He will turn and say: "*I was hungry and you gave Me to eat, thirsty and you gave Me to drink, a stranger and you took Me in, naked and you covered Me . . .*" And they shall ask in astonishment: "When, Lord?" And He shall answer: "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these, My least brethren, you did it to Me." And these shall go into everlasting life. They have reached the journey's end laden with good works. Their luggage bore the right label and it has all arrived safely.

Just because that same label is missing those on His left hand are condemned. "As long as you did it *not* to one of these My least brethren, neither did you do it unto Me." For this alone they are excluded from the kingdom. "And these shall go into everlasting punishment."

What They  
Forgot

Many of them probably did kind deeds. Many of them submitted to the conventions of good society and were considered models of refinement and tact. But once again all was vitiated by the motive. Underneath there lurked the galling insincerity of a heart enslaved by worldliness. There was no real love, only make-believe. There was no seeing Christ in others and loving them for that reason. If they did kindly deeds, or repressed signs of annoyance, or spoke pleasingly, it was all done from selfish motives—to win applause, to secure worldly advancement, to curry favour with those who wielded worldly power. The motive underlying all their external show was self in one form or another, and in that selfishness they are now confirmed. Their goods were not labelled, and so Our Lord, because He is just, must tell them at the end: "I never knew you."

One more scene to illustrate the closeness of the union which binds Christ to the member of His mystical body. Saul of Tarsus is kneeling on the dusty road outside the city



of Damascus. He is a bigot and a persecutor of the Christians, and to-day Our Lord shows Himself to him and asks him : "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me ? . . . I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest." Now you will observe that at this time Our Lord had already ascended into heaven. How then could He complain that the wrath of Saul was directed against Him ? How, except by identifying Himself with His disciples ? Injure the hand or the eye in the human body and you injure the whole person. Injure a member of the mystical body and Jesus complains : "You are doing that to Me."

All that has been said thus far is put forward by way of explaining the teaching of Our Lord about love of the neighbour. Before we pass on to the second part of our paper it may be worth  
 Summing Up while gathering up the points He stresses under a few heads. You tie on a label for two reasons—to distinguish the property which belongs to you from everyone else's, and to prevent your things from going astray. Practical charity is the "label" distinguishing the true Christian. Without this label the luggage will certainly go astray at the end of life's journey. This charity must be built upon a supernatural motive—the kind deeds done because you recognise that your neighbour takes Christ's place, is part of His mystical body. So intent is Christ on making you understand the importance of all this that He calls charity His own special commandment. "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

## II

So much, then, for the theory. We now come to the practical working out of this teaching of Christ in our own daily lives. You would be inclined to say at the outset that it is impossible to overstate the far-reaching effects of this principle. One is almost bewildered by the multitude of implications of the great commandment which at this point begin to range themselves before the mind's eye.

You are reading these lines, let me suppose, on a Sunday afternoon. Whoever you are and wherever you live you will not go through the week ahead of you without running into innumerable opportunities of treating others as you would treat Christ.

You are a teacher and on each of the next six days you are going to stand several hours before your class. Those young people are eaten up, Next  
Week you tell me, with love of the world and you almost despair of making any impression on them and awakening in them a true religious sense. They come to you with minds dissipated by the reading of sentimental novels, with their impressions of the meaning and sacredness of human existence warped by film stars, with no thought in their minds except amusement and a good time. Christ is very effectively disguised here, isn't He? It is at times like this that your spirit of faith is tested. If they were easy to manage, solidly pious, responsive to your efforts, you would have a powerful stimulus to your zeal. But after all nearly anybody would delight in leading a class of that sort. It is when you have to penetrate the disguise and discover Christ beneath that you show most convincingly that your zeal is of sterling quality. "You did it to Me"—every effort on behalf of your unruly brood is marked by Him, and, for your consolation, is bound to produce its effects, if not here, certainly elsewhere, perhaps at the antipodes. Nothing done from the motive of charity is lost, despite appearances. The label will make it secure at the end. *Bon courage* then.

You are an employer in shop or factory. Does it ever remotely occur to you to apply the practice of the great commandment in your dealings with those Authority  
from God men under you? Or do you regard them as "hands" merely, as cogs to be used for the efficient running of your machine? Isn't it astounding when you sit back and think of it, that He assures you solemnly that what you do to them is done to



Him ? And if the employee came to look upon his employer as holding his authority from God, and if he did his day's work in a spirit of loyalty and obedience not to a mere man but to God's vicegerent, with what conscientiousness he would labour, and what treasures he would daily accumulate in heaven ! If all this seems fantastic the sorrowful admission has to be made by way of explanation that even we Catholic employers and Catholic employees have got far away from Christ's standards. We are forgetting the label.

Here is a nurse or doctor in the hospital ward. Those patients are entrusted to you, not only that you may tend to the needs of the poor body, which, despite all medical skill, must die soon in any case. But the eye of faith recognises Christ behind that cancer or lupus or diphtheria or fractured limb. As you fasten that bandage, or mix that medicine, or apply that poultice, you may hear the very voice of Christ speaking to you through your patient's lips and telling you : " You are doing this to Me ! " You are touching Him in a member of His mystical body. Souls, not mere bodies, are all around you ; how much apostolic spirit is in you ?

The great principle can find its way, and should, even into trifles. You give up your place in a bus or tram—you have done that to Christ. You refuse to elbow your way in the queue and another secures the last place which should have been yours—suppress your anger and your deed is regarded by Christ as done to Him. You share your umbrella with this poor half-drenched old woman—you are giving shelter to Christ. You carry the parcel for that messenger boy or those letters for the postman up that avenue where you were going in any case, and so you save him a walk of ten minutes ; you are gracious and considerate towards those who cannot retaliate, the waiter or the char-woman or the street singer ; you close the window with a good grace when you very much want to leave it open, to satisfy the whim of somebody who is hipped about draughts ; you make place for another, and willingly, in your bench

in Church ; you refrain from looking back with an expression of annoyance at the man who exasperates you by "whispering" his prayers aloud ; you check a mannerism because you have discovered, perhaps by accident, that it gets on someone's nerves ; you put aside your pipe or cigarette smilingly, in the railway carriage, just because the dear old lady sniffs ominously and pointedly asks her companion if this is not a non-smoking compartment ; you laugh good-humouredly when inwardly you are seething with annoyance, and nobody suspects what it costs you—the thousand and one little acts that can be seized upon and sanctified if we realise that all this is done to Christ in one of the members of His mystical body !

The great commandment gives us the clue too, to much that is otherwise unintelligible in the saints' lives. You see, they are overwhelmed with gratitude to Our Lord for the graces with which He has inundated their souls. They understand much more profoundly than we do the astonishing truth that His Heart is on fire with love for them. And they experience an ache, an immense longing, to prove to Him the sincerity of their love for Him. Then they ponder on the great commandment and it begins to send its rays, like a great arc-light, into every nook and corner of their daily lives. Here is the way, par excellence, of repaying love for love. "You did it to Me" ! Such a joyful discovery is this, Jesus living in His members !

That is why Francis Xavier tore his heart out of his much-loved Spain and separated himself from friends and relatives, to slave for souls in India and Japan. That is why St. Catherine of Siena watched by the bedside and waited lovingly on an old witch whom nobody else would go near. And the ungrateful creature repaid the saint by spreading shameful calumnies about her, and Catherine retaliated by redoubling her attentions ! That is why the Jesuit martyr, St. Noel Chabanel, after trying for years without success, to master the language of the North American Indians, bound himself by vow to remain in the

A Few  
Examples

midst of them till his death ! The charity of the saints is indeed all-embracing, but if they have a predilection it would seem to be for those who are ungrateful and inappreciative. For if you show love to such, you have a surer guarantee that you are actuated by the motive of pure love of Christ. "If you love them that love you," says Our Lord, "what thanks are due to you ? Do not also the heathens this ?"

It may be worth while illustrating further how the practice of the great commandment meets you at every turn. Here comes into your office the bore, and when you are very busy too ! You foresee that this interview is going to consume at least twenty minutes of your precious time. And of course he will tell you, in his leisurely way, his funny story, which you have already endured ten times, on a rough calculation. Instinctively you prepare yourself to cut him short and show him the door. Instead, you suppress all sign of irritation. Instead, you listen with apparent interest for the eleventh time, to his tale, and at the end you pat him on the shoulder, shake hands and send him off with a cheery smile. Now why didn't you bustle him out ? Because you saw Christ in Him, and a grateful Christ looks out at you through the man's eyes and assures you : "You have done that to Me."

(In parenthesis let me forestall a possible objection. Of course if you can escape the bore and husband your valuable time, without hurting him, by all means do so. This can be done by jokingly bowing him out, or better still by managing to see him first !).

You step out of your office at lunch hour and a poor man stops you to ask for an alms. All right, snap at him if you will. Tell him what you think of frauds like him. But before you begin your tirade may I tip you on the arm and remind you that what you are going to say is said to one who takes Christ's place ? Yes, even if the man in sober truth is a swindle. "You did it to Me."

Or you have to deal with a sinner, a man or woman whose evil life is the talk of the town. You are going to

upbraid him, are you ? To denounce him in harsh cutting tones ? But after all the man has sinned, not against you but against God, and God is all eagerness to forgive him. What right have you, then, to hurl invectives at his head ? You have often prayed, haven't you, to have your trespasses forgiven in the same measure as you forgive others ? Suppose Our Lord had taken you at your word ? Suppose He had treated you after your sin, as you are on the point of treating the man standing here ? And anyhow, what is going to be the result of your harshness ? Is it going to make your sinner a genuine convert ? I doubt it. Much more likely is it that it will harden him in his sin. " You will catch more flies with a spoon of honey than with a hundred barrels of vinegar." At any rate be chary of how you speak, for you are addressing Christ in one of His members.

You have always been on friendly terms with Mrs. So-and-So, but the other day she snubbed you, just because she happened to be walking with Lady Furcoat from Aristocratic Square ! The idea ! You are fuming with indignation. So she considers her salute a compliment, does she ? Very well. Just wait till you meet her again and you will teach her !

Next day you see her approaching and this time you observe with delight that she is alone. Here now is your chance and you almost lick your lips in pleasant anticipation. This is where you get your own back, stare her full in the face (so as to make quite sure she knows you have seen her), and then very deliberately look the other way. Yes, it is very human, I suppose. But let me ask you : Suppose Jesus Christ was walking up this street towards you, would you, a Catholic, dream of acting towards Him with this studied rudeness ? Why, of course not. Well open wide your eye of faith for He assures you that He is, in very truth, hidden there in that vain silly woman approaching you.

But Our Lord would never have snubbed me as she did. Granted. We are not defending her either. She too must



learn that He regards her foolish pride as shown towards Him. But though she is wrong, He is going to take your return as done to Him. Where am I to find words to express the merit you will gain and the proof of love you will give Him if you smother your indignation? So please dispel that frown, and at once, for she is quite near by now. Come along and give her your most friendly smile. Can you hear the echo in your heart: "You have done that to Me"?

That wealthy old aunt of yours had left you a nice substantial little sum in her will. But busybody came to hear of it and whispered lies about you which the dear soul believed. Forthwith you find yourself cut off from your share. Of course you are in a fever of anger. Now listen. Would you like to do something heroic, for the sake of Him Who died for you, for your aunt, and even for busybody? Would you welcome an opportunity of giving Christ a really magnificent proof of your love? All right. Seal your lips. Let not a word of complaint against the manifest injustice escape you, and begin to-morrow a novena of the most fervent Holy Communions you ever made, and offer it—for busybody!!

You dearly love to discuss a spicy piece of scandal over the teacups. Up comes the name of the absent one, and at once you are all alert. Yes, push your cup to the right and your plate to the left.   
 Over the                      cup to the right and your plate to the left.  
 Teacups                      With your dainty fingers lay hold of  
    that absent person's character. Settle back  
 now in your chair, tighten your grip on the poor reputation, and prepare to tear it to shreds, section by section, limb by limb, atom by atom. But before you begin let me ask you to pause for just one moment and look in my direction. Down there in the secret places of your heart please say three times: "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest." That is all I want. Now turn your head again in the direction of your table companion and proceed—if you dare!

You are assistant in that shop and standing behind the counter. Just look at who is coming in. Oh, one glance is all you need for you know her well—that impossible nuisance

who pulls the whole place down about your ears and then calmly marches off without buying anything. Fortunate, isn't it, that you saw her in time? This is where you fade out behind the curtain and allow the other unsuspecting assistant to walk into the lion's—or should we say into the lioness's—mouth? What a laugh you will have at her afterwards! How clever you think yourself to wriggle so opportunely out of this unpleasant corner! Listen again. *Refuse to wriggle out.* Take on the old lady, wait on her pleasantly, smile and chat with her as if she was the one person in the whole world with whom you wanted to spend the remainder of the afternoon! Forestall the other girl. Restrain your desire to appear the smart one. But why on earth should I? Because down in the depths of your soul you catch the tiny whisper of Jesus: "As long as you did it to one of these you did it to Me." And if the other girl doesn't see why you did it, don't you tell her. And if the laugh appears to be on her side, join in it!

You must let me remind you too, that charity begins at home. If there is one place more than another where you should try to live up to this high ideal it is in your relations with the other members of your family. There are some who keep all their smiles for outsiders and are nearly impossible to live with at home. Outbursts of bad temper, constant quarrelling and bickering, bad example to children, back answering from children to parents—where would there be room for all that if each member of the household had come to recognise Christ in father and mother and brother and sister?

I suppose that in even the best families there will be an occasional misunderstanding. Or some weakness will betray itself in husband or wife. It is no small part of charity towards the home to guard carefully those "family secrets." To be constantly telling the world about your bad-tempered husband or nagging wife, to rail bitterly against the exactions of father or mother—no, let us keep our family business and difficulties within the walls of our own home and have sense



enough to understand that there are little matters or great which should not be spoken of outside.

And what about the neighbouring families ? From my heart I hope you are not the type of Catholic who keeps up long-standing differences with those around you. Such conduct is nothing short of highly scandalous. You pass that man or woman and refuse to bid them the time of the day. You drive to Mass on Sunday but you wouldn't dream of offering him or her a lift as they trudge along. The tradition grows up with your children and from their earliest years they are taught to ignore those people who live, perhaps, within a stone's throw of the home. And why ? All because of some miserable misunderstanding or petty quarrel. Because in the heat of the moment you and he exchanged a few angry words. And for all these years you harden your heart and harbour this feeling of resentment and refuse to forgive and forget ? Yes, disgraceful is the word, and don't forget the label. This too you are doing to Christ. Now before you read any further turn down the page and make up your mind that this very day you are going to end this wretched business.

Do you recall what Our Lord has to say about this sort of thing ? " If you offer your gift at the altar and there you remember that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift at the altar and go off and be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." It is a good rule to be the first to apologise, even if the other is in fault. You never will have to endure the smallest fraction of the injustice of Calvary, and Jesus retaliated by praying for His persecutors.

So you are not surprised that we prefaced this portion of our booklet with the remark that the practical applications are nearly infinite, of the principle under consideration. That is something to be intensely grateful for, for it means that at every turn you find abundant opportunities of exercising your love for Christ. And do not take

The  
Neighbours

Even  
Once

alarm and say that the great commandment is too difficult to fulfil. Of course you will fail sometimes. Of course you will let occasions slip. But keep trying. Even one such victory over self like those shown above is a source of immense gain to your soul, and, as we saw, it is the proof He values most of all of the love you profess for Him. So once more—keep your eye on the label.

Yes, you find opportunities everywhere if you watch for them. Do you remember the Little Flower kneeling that evening in her convent chapel? All day she had been looking forward to this quiet hour of prayer, and now it has come at last and she settles down to it. All goes splendidly for a few minutes till presently a fidgety sister enters the chapel and proceeds to park herself right behind the saint. Throughout the entire hour she kept rattling her rosary and shifting about, and the young nun in front felt, I fancy, beads of perspiration breaking out on her forehead. Why? Because all this is upsetting her prayer, and fifty times in the course of the hour she wanted to turn around and say: "For goodness' sake will you keep still and leave your beads alone?" And fifty times she forced herself to put on the brake. "You did it to Me"—the same motive all the time.

And you can recall the day when she was down in the laundry bent over her tub of clothes. Opposite St. Thérèse, over her own tub, was another sister, a large, good-natured soul. In her thoughtless way she sent the suds every now and then flying across and they came full in the saint's face. Many times again was she on the point of taking out her handkerchief and wiping them away and thus showing the good lady what inconvenience she was causing. But that tiny warning voice within told her that here was a chance of proving her love, and, *after a struggle*, she was able to pretend not even to notice. After a while she tells us, she actually began to enjoy the performance!

Gems of great holiness lie strewn across our path every other day. Those who are keen stoop to pick them up.

“To those who love God all things work together unto good.”

These practical applications are given more or less haphazard. It is time now we were a little more methodical, so let us see how Our Lord's great commandment works out under three different heads—charity in the matter of *thought*, of *word*, and of *act*.

*Thoughts*.—A father or mother, told about the disgrace of their child, hopes against hope that the report is false or at least exaggerated—because they love.

Charity thinketh  
no Evil

A person is very reluctant to believe that his friend has proved himself a traitor—because he sets a high value on that friendship, because he has trusted the man or woman and shared with them the innermost secrets of his soul. A son or daughter living in Australia learns that a lady bearing the same name as mother dropped dead in a Dublin street to-day. They do not *want* to think that it is she. They will cable at once to find out, and while waiting for the reply they are full of anxiety and try by every means to persuade themselves that the alarm has no foundation. In the case of all three, parent or child or friend, there is a marked unwillingness, a repugnance even, to giving credence to the tale, because the person concerned is someone who is loved.

That is exactly the reaction towards another's fault which you will find in the man or woman who understands the great commandment. So far from investigating into the truth of the rumour with a sort of excited hope that it may be so, so far from gloating over it and retailing it with a sense of satisfaction if it be discovered to be indeed a fact, you will find on the contrary that he hopes in his heart that what has been said is untrue or exaggerated. He does not *want* it to be so. His tendency is to close his eyes to the shortcoming, however obvious, and his ears to the evil report however loudly it be proclaimed from the housetops. The reason is always the same. In his neighbour he sees Christ and he is saddened by any shadow which would dim the beauty of the vision.

Moreover everyone knows from experience how very easily reports become distorted in the telling, and as a result how black the evidence may look against an accused until it is thoroughly sifted by a competent judge. I open the day's paper and I read that a man has been arrested on suspicion of having committed murder. In due course the trial begins and part of the evidence comes to light. It looks very bad for the arrested man, and you are inclined to think that he is guilty and doomed to be hanged. As one session follows another you are confirmed in your first impression. You talk about the man to your friends—the barber who cuts your hair tells you it is clear that he is guilty, the chance companion with whom you get into conversation in the bus asks you if he is yet sentenced, taking it for granted that the pronouncing of the sentence is only a matter of time.

And lo, at the end of several weeks and after much lengthy discussion and bringing forward of all that accumulation of evidence, the jury surprises everyone by returning a verdict of "not guilty." It is true that there may have been much against the man, but on the main charge he is acquitted. It takes an expert to weigh up the merits of the case. You can recall that this sort of thing does happen, and the moral is : Even from motives of natural prudence, apart altogether from the high supernatural motive, be slow to believe evil of another. You never can tell. You are not an expert.

But suppose the evil has *certainly* been done ? Suppose the evidence is such as to compel me to give an unfavourable verdict ? I cannot help knowing that my neighbour has said bitter and untrue things about me, for with my own ears I have overheard him. I cannot but believe that so-and-so is dishonest, for I have caught him red-handed three times in the same week. I cannot do otherwise than see through the sham and hypocrisy of a so-called friend, and I know the underhand methods by which he succeeds in carrying off a situation.

What becomes of the great commandment in cases like



these ? Well, once again you will be slow to allow your mind *to dwell* on these thoughts. If you are impelled to think of your neighbour's faults, you will re-act by trying to remember that he is possessed too, in all probability, of many qualities that are excellent. But tell me, did you yourself ever do evil to another ? Were you ever dishonest or dishonourable or uncharitable or false to your friends ? Were you ever guilty of vices which St. Paul affirms should not so much as be mentioned amongst Christians ? And now you are the one to sit and criticise another ! Why, the plain fact of the matter is that you have probably done much worse yourself than your neighbour. And if you haven't you owe your escape, not to anything of innate goodness in yourself but only to the sustaining grace of an omnipotent God allying Himself with your weakness. "What hast thou that thou hast not received, and if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hast not received ?" If you must sit in judgment, it is sane to begin by placing yourself in the dock. And if others get on your nerves, remember it is not unlikely that you get on their nerves. A most fantastic suggestion, no doubt, but still one worth setting down in this place !

I wonder if you want me to talk about the man or woman who thinks that everyone is "down" on them. You know the type of person I have in mind ; they  
 "Imaginitis" are suffering, in many cases, from a disease which we conveniently call "imaginitis."

You see two people in close conversation and they lower their voices as you draw near—at once you come to the conclusion that they are discussing you. The lady next door quite innocently drops a chance remark—you begin to explore for the *arrière pensée* and you keep ferreting into your mind to try to discover what is her insinuation. An acquaintance of yours smiles at you in the street and you wonder what he is sneering at. You receive a letter and between the lines you read a jibe or an insult at your expense. You ask a question and the straightforward answer arouses your suspicions. You are asked a simple question and you deter-

mine to hedge lest you give yourself away. Your employer changes your hours or your place on the staff and you proceed to hunt for a scheme to undo you, to injure your reputation, to pay you off—goodness knows for what !

One might extend the list almost endlessly. There is no knowing where a man or woman will stop if once they allow the imagination to run away with them in this fashion. For it is the imagination. Once again the common sense of the matter is that ordinarily you won't find folk who take the bother to give you a fraction of the thought that you are attributing to them. In point of fact they usually find something more interesting to do or to think about. For proof of this consult your own experience. Take yourself to task and find out how much or how little you yourself think about others—what they do or why they do it. The ordinary man or woman is not given to prying constantly into other people's affairs, and it is foolish in many cases, and opposed to the great commandment, to keep imagining that they do so in yours.

But once again suppose you happen to be right. Suppose your neighbours are actually watching your actions narrowly, discussing them in detail, and attributing to you motives of which you never even thought. If you are quite sincere won't you have to admit to yourself that all they say is negligible in comparison with what they could say if they knew you as Our Lord knows you ? Suppose a film of your life was shown in a public cinema—all your secret thoughts and words and acts exhibited on the silver screen for a crowded house to witness. You would feel somewhat embarrassed, wouldn't you, to say the least ? Having seen that film what can they say *now* and what can they think ? Isn't the reality much more humiliating than that slight, real or imaginary, about which you were fuming ?

There is another point to be made before we end this section of our booklet. Here is a man or woman who has been uniformly kind to you, who has many many times given of his best, always considerate, always approachable, always



ready with the wisdom of experience to help you. You ask for an interview and, though you do not know it, at a most inconvenient moment, and you are given it, and for as long as you wish. You write, and the prompt reply soothes your worry. Financial difficulties come, and this friend steps forward, puts his hand in his pocket and solves your problems for you.

This has been his habitual attitude for years, a true friend indeed and his adoption tried. But after all those innumerable proofs of his friendship he makes one small slip. He fails to write as promptly as usual, or his letter contains a phrase that displeases you. Or he tells you that times are bad and he cannot send you that sum you asked. Or, sorely-harassed as he may be, perhaps his temper snaps, just this once, and he does actually say an impatient word. Now there is a type of person who, after this first slip, will immediately forget all the kindness, all the instances of patience and regard—all these are swallowed up in a black-out and the full blaze of light is focussed on this momentary failure. Yes it is most unfair, but it happens.

“Charity thinketh no evil.” The only form of pity to be excluded from your life is pity for *self*. Even if your suspicions are well founded and even verified, stifle the harsh thought. Remember you have to love Our Lord with your *whole* mind. Now you are not loving Him with as much of your mind as you allow to be filled up with those unkind thoughts. To refuse entrance to such thoughts, to forbid resolutely to oneself the satisfaction of complaining even in the most secret places of one’s own heart, to repel every inclination to do so with the same promptitude with which one rejects an impure suggestion—quite often this will be a love for Christ little short of heroic.

And why am I to try to do it? Because the person who has offended you, perhaps with studied deliberation, even such a one takes Christ’s place. To refuse to retaliate by even dwelling in thought on the injury and nursing the sore—this too is done to Him. “You did it to Me.”

Hard, is it? Yes, very hard, heroic indeed, as we have just said. But it was very hard for Christ to go to Calvary. It was very hard for Mary to stand under the cross and watch Him die. Very hard, yes, but well for you and me that they did not say it was too hard. It is hard to repress the harsh thought when you are in fault. It is harder still when you are innocent. But if it is meritorious to do so when you are guilty it is heroic when you know in your own heart that the charge is false. That is why Our Lord and Our Lady stir the depths of our souls by the dauntless courage they show. That is why only heroes can fathom the lessons of Calvary.

You talk about going to Lough Derg or Croagh Patrick to do penance—excellent things of course. But beware of looking for the extraordinary and missing the opportunity, an immense one, that is lying at your elbow.

*Words.*—Let me begin this paragraph with a quotation from Canon Sheehan's book *Luke Delmege*. Father Luke notes in his diary: "The canon . . . actually for the first time, said a kind word about my sermon. . . . Why are the old so economical about kind words to the young? They are cheap, and God only knows what a splendid tonic is a kind word."

It would seem that there are three reasons for withholding a word of encouragement, and of these the first is jealousy. Mrs. Next-Door's daughter's engagement is announced to the young man whom you considered a Mr. Very Eligible for your little girl. You are soured and green with envy and you cannot refrain from showing it. In an extreme case you might even go the lengths of defaming the young man. Everyone sees why.

Your boy does not shine as brilliantly as you expected in his final exam. at the University. His results make a sorry comparison with those of Jim or Jack, your neighbour's son, and a full year and a half younger than your Tom. You meet Jim's delighted father or rapturous mother, but you can scarcely bring yourself to mention the

Are You  
Jealous?



Your little girl aged six brings home her exercise and waits eagerly till you return after your day's work. She has secured full marks—a large ten out of ten, written across the page in characters unmistakable, and by the principal teacher's own hand too. The child runs delightedly to show it to you the moment she hears your latchkey click in the hall door. In itself it is of small importance but it assumes huge dimensions in the child's little world. And you the father, how do you regard it? Oh, you are tired, or preoccupied, or worried about that deal. You scarcely look at the open page, hand it back to the child, tell her run off and play, and call to your wife to ask if tea is ready! And away goes the little girl—on the verge of tears, I'm afraid. You forgot the tiny word of appreciation and encouragement which would have made all the difference.

And yes, your excellent wife has the tea ready, and has secured by fair means or foul a very limited supply of real white flour. Here is a sight in these days, this beautiful white loaf waiting to be eaten. But you make no comment on it. You do not seem to notice, or if you do, perhaps it is only to say that it tastes insipid and that you prefer the brown! She may make no reply, but I'm thinking there is a soreness felt somewhere all the same.

And, woman of the house, for goodness' sake do not choose this moment to broadcast your woes. If the maid has given notice, this is not the time to tell him; if you have felt the day long and lonely and had been looking forward to a happy gathering in the evening which now is clearly "off," wait till another time to say so; and let me implore you not to nag—at any time at all—but especially this evening. If nagging is objectionable in ordinary circumstances, it would be nothing short of calamitous to-night. Some wives are utterly tactless and for them this little word of warning is spoken. Of course you never nag, so you don't need it!

You missed the last tram the other night and you had to walk home. You are annoyed about it too, for the night was bitterly cold and the rain heavy. As you pick



your way in high dudgeon through the muddy streets  
 you come upon this little wooden hut,  
 The Last                      and inside a poor man smoking his pipe.  
 Tram                         He is going to sit here all night in the  
 cold taking charge of this engine drawn up on the side  
 of the street. Hundreds pass him up and down, stare  
 curiously for a moment and walk on. Suppose you stopped  
 and said a kindly word? But why, and when I'm in so  
 bad a mood and in a hurry? "You did it to Me."

The inclination is strong to go on illustrating ways and  
 means of putting in a word of encouragement. But what about  
 shortage of paper, and there is still much to try to fit into  
 our booklet? What has been said will be suggestive, we hope,  
 and above all never lose sight of the motive. Keep your eye  
 on the label.

So let me round off this section by adding: Your husband  
 has taken the pledge and kept it for three months. Now  
 Christmas is drawing perilously near, so say your word of  
 praise and encouragement. He has taken to going to daily  
 Mass and Holy Communion and has joined the Sodality;  
 tell him of the joy you feel. Your wife is wearing a new  
 pullover knitted by herself, or she has put up new curtains,  
 or black-leaded the range, or painted the windows—oh, notice  
 it and tell her so. Say she is a marvel to have been able to  
 secure the paint at such a small cost, or the thread when you  
 were assured it was impossible to buy, or that those lovely  
 curtains give such a cheery aspect to the room. In a word  
 be on the look out for your opportunities and you will find  
 them crowding into your day. Do not omit the word of  
 encouragement through thoughtlessness.

There is yet a third reason why it is left unsaid. You tell  
 me you do not want to give so-and-so a "swelled head";  
 you want to "take him down a peg"; he needs it badly;  
 everyone knows he is a bit of a bounder. Well, do they  
 know, I wonder? Once again recall what we have just  
 been saying about the struggles people have to keep going,  
 the strong tendency to lose heart and consider that effort is  
 useless. Often the "bounder" attitude may be only a  
 smoke-screen to conceal all this.

Remember too that if there is a danger of puffing up one person with pride there is another even more fatal in its consequences. That is, that enormous good work may never be touched simply because those eager and willing to do it are not encouraged. There is a real danger that zeal will cool down in this frigid atmosphere. People who once were on fire degenerate into cynics. Idealism wilts. Potential giants shrink into pigmies, like Alice in Wonderland. Atrophy and indifference and callousness, worldliness even—all these are the sad effects often resulting from want of encouragement. We are not saying that such a reaction is justifiable, but it is very intelligible. We do not want to maintain that zeal for souls should be dependent on the poor small word of encouragement you or I can give. Perhaps it shouldn't be, but in actual practice aren't there many excellent works never undertaken, thwarted, abandoned, simply because those willing and capable received no encouragement or inspiration ?

We have thus touched upon three reasons why the word of encouragement is left unsaid—jealousy, thoughtlessness, and fear of puffing up with pride. There does not seem to be much to say in favour of any of the three, and I can think of no others. If you can, please send them along and we shall have much pleasure in bombarding them together.

On the other hand look at what a word of encouragement can do. I have just been reading Mr. Denis Gwynn's new book *The Second Spring*. In the first chapter he gives an account of the entry into the English College in Rome of a quiet unassuming student. The young man was devoted to his work and he settled down with earnestness to prepare himself for the priesthood. Fortunately he met with encouragement. Mgr. Mai, Prefect of the Vatican Library, took the young man up. At twenty-three he was appointed Professor of Oriental languages, and at twenty-five he was Rector of the College ! Later he became Cardinal Wiseman, the leader of the Hierarchy on its restora-



tion in England. His colossal work for religion must be read elsewhere. For the moment the question that concerns us is: Suppose he had *not* been encouraged, would the Church ever have been adorned with his virtues and learning, and would he ever have been God's instrument for the salvation and sanctification of so many souls?

Other examples spring readily to the mind. Ignatius encouraged Xavier and he became a giant amongst missionaries. Claver, encouraged by Rodriguez, became the apostle of the negroes. It is surely a mighty stimulus to realise the power we can wield by saying a kindly word. And to realise this is also a warning, for who can estimate the good that may be left undone through the lack of it? "Kind words . . . they are cheap, and God only knows what a splendid tonic is a kind word."

In this, as in much else, we might well take a page from the enemy's volume. Have you ever noticed how Christ's foes support each other? An absurd theory is advanced—it is written up and applauded on all sides. An attack on religion is launched—they haven't any decent argument to put forward and they know it. But just the same they are four square and dare anyone oppose them! And here are we Catholics, with all the magnificent heritage of our Catholic Faith, with our feet planted firmly on the solid rock of truth—why on earth cannot we too stand shoulder to shoulder and support each other? "A brother that is helped by a brother is like a strong city."

It is bad enough to refuse to say the generous word but we have still to notice the positive ways by which the tongue can be used to offend against the great commandment.

The type of man who studiously avoids saying the word of encouragement is often the very one who waxes most eloquent if you happen to fail. For many years you have been working away in your St. Vincent de Paul Society, or in your Legion Praesidium, or in your Sodality of Our Lady. But, God help you, you are, it may be, growing weary in your well-doing and you begin to show

I Told  
You So

signs of taking things easy. At once this type becomes surprisingly wideawake. Having sat back placidly himself all the time he now bestirs himself to take the floor and proceeds to explain that he saw you would not last. You were aiming at too much, weren't you? He knew all along and often told you so. Why *must* people talk in this strain? Blind they seemed to be and dumb as long as everything was going well with you. Did anyone mention your good work they would smile knowingly as though to impress you with their own prudence and superior knowledge. And now make the smallest slip, or fail to rise to your best, and what an awakening from slumber and what a chorus of comment!

What are we to say about gossiping? So much there is to say that the subject would require a booklet of its own. Have you ever had an experience like this: A new employer is going to take over, or a new neighbour is moving into your district, or a new priest is coming to the parish. Before ever you meet the newcomer you are prejudiced against him. Why? Because of the gossip's tongue. Newcomer starts life with a big handicap, and it is only by degrees, when you have made personal contact, that you begin to discover that the tale spread about him was twisted out of all recognition. Lucky if even after a time you do come to see, for often the gossip has done irreparable harm. And that is done to Christ. "As long as you did it to one of these . . . you did it to Me."

Or you have a lifelong friend, or even it may be a devoted wife or husband, and once again the gossip's tongue begins to wag. You are indignant that any aspersion should be cast upon your friend and you are perfectly furious at the suggestion that the wife or husband you love is not everything you believe them to be. You repudiate the idea at once, but for all that damage has been done, and with an insidiousness that might almost be called diabolical. For, in spite of yourself, you may find yourself dwelling in thought on the accusation and half wondering to yourself if, after all, there could be any truth in it. Once more let

Gossip's  
Tongue

gossip come forward and listen to Our Lord charging him or her with doing this evil to Him. "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest." Let gossip walk around the stations of the cross and watch those executioners scourging Christ, nailing Christ, jeering at Him in His agony. And let them listen to the words on those dying lips, as, with eyes fixed upon them He complains : "*You are doing this to Me.*"

Are you a good mimic ? You possess a dangerous gift and beware how you use it. "But 'tis only a bit of fun." Certainly I'm quite prepared to believe it, and we all need the lighter side of life. But your little bit of fun ceases to be funny if it begins to give pain. And even though the others laugh at the time, in their hearts they do not like you any better for what they recognise as not being quite fair. Moreover they have a lurking suspicion in their hearts that when they are absent your gift may be used against themselves, and the suspicion is not going to do you any good.

Can you say sarcastic things ? And sarcastic things that are really clever ? Do not try to persuade me that he or she needs it badly, that it will do them good, that it is high time they were put in their place. I'm exceedingly doubtful if sarcasm ever does anyone any good—either you who indulge in it, or him or her who is the victim of it. On the other hand I do know very well that it has crushed and nearly broken entirely the spirit of the one towards whom it was directed. It stings, and often with a poisonous fang.

Beware of  
Sarcasm

Did you ever receive a letter which caused you great annoyance ? You asked for a favour and you have been refused, and curtly. You sent a query and the answer tells you, in so many words, to mind your own business. You have done a piece of work, of whatsoever nature, upon which your heart was set, and this letter turns it into ridicule. What is nature's reaction ? To seize your pen and write back a "snorter" ? If you do, you will probably live to regret it. Instead, wait a while. Put the offending document into your desk until to-morrow, and do not think too much about it meantime. You will be surprised how the hard

expressions it contains will seem to mellow overnight. Or, if you must write on the spur of the moment, all right, do so. But do not, on any account, post your letter for twenty-four hours. By that time you will probably consign it to the wastepaper basket. And, even at the risk of wearying you with my reiterations, keep your eye on the label. Remember *why*.

In general, let adverse comment pass you by. If you write a reply with unaffected kindness the recipient will probably think you a nincompoop and imagine you did not see through his irony. What about that? Let all such things be. They are not worth a fraction of the time and the energy you will expend in trying to explain them. If you can train yourself to leave them alone you may safely promise yourself immense peace of soul. You expect encouragement and you find apathy. You look for sympathy and you meet with cynicism or open hostility. You crave for a word of understanding when you are weary, or lonely, or timid, or a failure, and instead you receive blame or a sneer. Never mind. The only form of pity to exclude from your life is self-pity. Keep going. Keep trying. Let me implore you not to give up your efforts merely because they are not appreciated. Once again the label will tell you why.

It is sound advice to warn you to be chary, very chary, of speaking about yourself. You know the type whose only subject of conversation seems to be that difficult person in the home, and who treats you on every possible occasion to lengthy documented accounts of the little squabbles and misunderstandings. To talk like that is not charity—it is not fair to the person you speak to nor to the one you speak about. You know the man, and you have probably learned to dread his appearance, who at the slightest provocation buttonholes you and tells you all about his pains and aches, whose only way of being happy seems to consist in a determination to be miserable! He tells you to-day that the weather is killingly oppressive and next month,



from the depths of his overcoat, he groans about the blasts of the east wind. Last week he gave you a dismal record of his sleepless nights and to-day he assures you that the war bread is driving him, surely if slowly, to a premature grave. And, the Lord forgive you, perhaps you are tempted to pray that it may be not too slowly !

If you are wise to say little about your ills, you will be wiser still to say nothing at all about your successes. St. Francis de Sales has a forcible passage warning you how easy it is to develop pride if you speak much about the good you do, under whatsoever pretext. And in any case the rest of us, who are perhaps just muddling through, may be discouraged or may even have difficulty in controlling our jealousy.

It is a useful exercise to try, occasionally, to write a letter without employing the personal pronoun.

A most powerful motive for charity in word in all these ways is reparation for the sins committed by the tongue, especially to-day. Think of all the hatred

A Strong  
Motive

expressed and stirred up by those vitriolic speeches you hear on your radio ; think of all the blasphemies uttered against God and the divinity of Our Lord ; think of the grossly immoral stories, the lies, the misuse of the Sacred Name so constantly current—for all this your care to fulfil the great commandment, especially in your use of words, is going to make some reparation. Once again you see that there are diamonds for your eternal crown strewn across your path. Do not miss them.

*Acts.*—There are a few hard or unpleasant things to be set forth about “ works of charity ” so let us get them said at once and finish with them. We saw that it is bad enough to speak disparagingly about works of zeal or to ignore another’s efforts in a stony silence. But what is to be said of those who positively and effectively oppose the doing of good ? It would be impossible to imagine this opposition on the part of excellent people, especially in its extreme forms, were there not indisputable facts to prove it. You see that

something needs to be done and you are more than willing to undertake it. But your hands are tied. There is a stumbling block right across your path. You are definitely told that the scheme is to be dropped, or that the room is not to be rented for that purpose, or that the man necessary for the success of your venture is not to be approached.

And why? Let us try to be very fair and readily admit that often there may be reasons which you do not see and which cannot be explained to you. Your scheme would, perhaps, be in the way of another one which will give more glory to God. Or if that room were lent to you there would immediately be impossible complications which you do not foresee. Or if that man was permitted to help you there would be no end of trouble with his employer or his family or too severe a drain on his purse.

But . . . . .

Are there not cases where that explanation could be given instead of a monosyllabic refusal? And if you were allowed to see the difficulty, might not there be some chance of removing it? And even if there were no such chance would you not be encouraged to keep up your efforts for souls when you see that the refusal this time is inevitable and made with a good grace?

Again. Are there not cases where the flat refusal is given for no reason at all? "It's not to be done and no more about it!" I admit that I have been told this

The Curt  
Refusal

sort of thing by zealous Catholic Actionists and with deep regret I saw the strong inclination to cease trying. No, that is not right. They should not cease trying, but if they do you find it hard to blame them. And would you or I like to be the one who would face the Almighty and explain to Him, as explain we must, *why* we had hindered His good work from flourishing? "You did it to Me." Did we think remotely of His glory and the salvation of souls when we gave our peremptory refusal? Once again was our motive pride or jealousy? Was the other person's zeal a censure on our own apathy? Now is the time to put ourselves these



questions and face up to the answers, for we have only one life and we shall not be passing this way again.

Our Lord has a frightening sentence which is worth while pondering in this connection : " Woe to you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men ; for you yourselves do not enter in, and those who are going in, you suffer not to enter." It is bad enough to be indifferent yourself to His interests, but it is little short of criminal to oppose effectively, without sound reasons, those who are eager to throw themselves into the Cause. And it is a fact that this is done, and done with calamitous and irreparable loss to souls.

" Who will roll us back the stone ? " How are you going to overcome unreasonable opposition in cases where its removal is imperative if good work is to go ahead ? Well, I have known apostolic men and women to allow the impression that they wanted to do the direct opposite of what they really desired in their hearts. Why ? Because, as surely as they took up one side, the opposing stone would roll to the other ! I have met zealous folk who permitted it to be believed that the magnificent scheme they had thought out was all the work of another. Why ? Because that was the only way of inducing the other to give a sanction that was indispensable ! I can recall a friend of mine once telling me, long ago, that he allowed himself to be beaten at a game of billiards in order to win the favour of a man whose co-operation was necessary for good work. And the ruse worked perfectly ! A sprinkling of the wisdom of the serpent makes excellent seasoning for the simplicity of the dove.

But with all your wisdom and tact, there will be times, I'm afraid, when the stone is impossible to move. It is not right, though, to acquiesce in this state of things at once. God's work thrives on opposition, and nobody ever did anything worth while for souls by running away from difficulties. Obstacles exist, not to be meekly tolerated but to be dynamited, once you are sure that they are unreason-

Rolling Away  
the Stone

able. Obstacles exist, for we are short sighted creatures, even the best of us, and the enemy is everlastingly on the prowl. Obstacles exist, but don't you be the one to raise them or to multiply them. Obstacles exist, but often the best course is not to charge at them, but to employ a little tact which has proved effective in the case of others and may prove so in yours also. I fervently hope it may. "O God," runs the fine prayer, "save me from the calm of the desert and the peace of cowards."

It is well to guard against hindering, not only the starting of good works but their perfection too. Anything done in fulfilling the great commandment should

The Gloss  
on the Apple

be made to yield the maximum of glory to God. You are a member of a sewing guild because you want to help the poor.

Excellent, but do not vitiate your fine work by talking uncharitably while you ply your needle. You are gifted with a glorious voice and you take part in your parish choir. Why? To sing God's praises, presumably, to lift up your soul to Him by a prayerful and reverent rendering of the sublime hymns and canticles of Holy Church. Once more congratulations, but do not spoil your undertaking by chatter and gossip, even during the holy Sacrifice, and by your silly sniggering in the Presence. You wash up dishes after the free breakfasts or penny dinners, you make beds at the hostel—well done, but let me remind you that there are some who must be selfish even in their good works. *They* must be in the limelight. *They* must have *their* way. *They* will work with this person but refuse to work with this other. And dare anyone make a suggestion to *them*! What a pity to take the gloss off the apple!

You are running a bazaar or a fete, or a sale of work. Why? Oh, for God's glory, of course. You are helping to build a Church or collecting funds for the foreign missions. Splendid, but beware lest you be inordinately anxious that *you* should head the list, that *your* stall should outshine all the others, or *your* entry win first prize. Healthy competition is all right, of course, and lends spice to your work, but easily

enough it could degenerate into a petty jealousy or pride which would rob you of much merit.

Do not scowl if your wife asks you to post her letter and to wait ten minutes till she finishes it. You may as well do the thing graciously. If you give your friend a present of a pair of gloves, do not say, every time you meet him, in the presence of others : " So this is the little Christmas box I sent you ! " You know perfectly well how annoying it is if you ask : " Is this what you bought with the pound I lent you last week ? " And do not tell me : " Yes, Mr. So-and-So certainly is very generous in giving to charities, but then I may say between ourselves that it mightn't do to enquire too closely into how he made his money." Or, " Mrs. Up-the-Street seems a very religious woman ; at Holy Communion every morning ; but did you never hear that she leads her unfortunate husband a dog's life ? " Be chary of the " buts " in contexts like these. These are other ways of taking the gloss off the apple.

It is hard to accept the failure of good work. You are all keyed up about zeal in your classroom, and a bolt from the blue sends you into other spheres, far removed from the scene of your fruitful labours.

<p><b>Your</b> <b>Failures</b></p>	<p>You had so much trouble in acquiring those premises for your club and furnishing them, but now, thank God, all is doing well. And the next night a fire breaks out or a bomb drops and in half an hour your grand work is a heap of ashes. A girl you had rescued had apparently made a break with her sinful past and you rejoice to know how well she is doing. And to-day's post brings you a letter to say that she has gone back again into her old haunts !</p>
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That is the sort of thing that often happens in apostolic work. You bestir yourself and try to get going, and you end, it seems, nowhere. What's the use ? Listen. No work can possibly fail if it be undertaken sincerely for God's glory and the good of souls. Tell me, was there much visible result to show from the life of Mary of Nazareth, or for that matter from the life of Our Lord Himself ? Mary lived in .

hiddenness, and Jesus her Son died a disgrace and a "failure" on Calvary. And often He would seem to allow excellent work to fall through to make you and me understand that it is not so much *what* we do He regards, as *why* we do it.

So remember if you cannot do anything spectacular that your ordinary humdrum day is teeming with little opportunities. To open a door for another, to place the chair for father or mother, to pass the salt, to lend your penknife or fountain pen, to raise your hat—trifles if you like, but who can gainsay their immense value if they are supernaturalised? "You have done it to Me."

This is the place to fit in a word about good manners. Here is a line from a letter lying before me: "I'm taking the liberty of asking your advice on . . . the appalling lack of good manners in general, and of table manners in particular." Does this "appalling lack" exist?

Let us begin with ourselves. How often do we use the word "please" and "thanks"? And teach them to the children? It seems to me that there is no more effective remedy for bad manners than a deepening of our understanding of the motive that has been stressed throughout these pages. "As long as you did it to one of these . . . you did it to Me."

For an inspiring account of works of zeal carried on right in our midst, I refer you to the article by Fr. Burke-Savage, S.J., in the *Irish Jesuit Directory* for 1941. In his "Sodality Odyssey" the author takes you for a trip, first round the Dublin Sodalities, and thence up and down the country, and gives you a glimpse of what the Sodality is doing in the field of Catholic Action in Ireland. We say "a glimpse" because we remember that there are 800 Sodalities with 50,000 members.

Or some day you may be privileged to look into the records of a St. Vincent de Paul Conference and to see what is being done, in practical ways, by that fine body, to help the poor who take the place of Christ

Or you may dip into any issue of *Maria Legionis* the organ of the Legion of Mary, and if you do, you are going to be

heartened by accounts of splendid achievements in fulfilment of the great commandment.

Most important of all it is, however, that you should yourself be practical and see if you cannot find good work waiting for you to do in one or other of these associations. They clamour for "Who is my Neighbour?" volunteers and they assure you there is work for all. "Who is my neighbour?"

Our Lord was asked, and He told the story of the Good Samaritan, and put His own question: "Who was neighbour to him who fell among the robbers?" The answer was obvious: "The neighbour was, not the priest or the levite who passed the wounded man by. The neighbour was the Samaritan who proved his charity by his deeds."

What a world it would be if men took the great commandment seriously! I need not point out that it is just because it is ignored that we have chaos on every side. The restoration of the world must begin by each individual Catholic living a genuinely Catholic life, and this implies, as is abundantly clear from all we have been saying, that we labour to reduce to practice, in great things and in small things, the lofty principle which lies at the basis of the structure. "You did it to Me." If He says that to you and me at the end we can look Him in the Face full of confidence, for the words are a guarantee and a promise that our luggage has arrived safely, conveyed thither by the label which marked it all along the way as belonging to Him.







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